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THE PLAYS OF HENRY ARTHUR JONES

THE MANŒUVRES OF JANE

An Original Comedy in Four Acts

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIARS," "MICHAEL AND HIS LOST ANGEL," "THE TEMPTER," "THE CRUSADERS," "JUDAH," "THE CASE OF REBELLIOUS SUSAN," "THE DANCING GIRL," "THE MIDDLEMAN," "THE ROGUE'S COMEDY," "THE TRIUMPH OF THE PHILISTINES," "THE MASQUERADERS," "THE MANŒUVRES OF JANE," "CARNAC SAHIB," "THE GOAL," "MRS. DANE'S DEFENCE," "THE LACKEY'S CARNIVAL," "THE PRINCESS'S NOSE," ETC.

"There is a tide in the affairs of women
Which taken at the flood leads—God knows where."
BYRON.

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THE MANŒUVRES OF JANE

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THE

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PERSONS REPRESENTED

Lord Bapchild
Jervis Punshon, of the Lodge, Chaney
George Langton
Mr. Nangle
Prebendary Bostock
Mr. Pawsey
Sir Robert Bowater
1st Footman
2nd Footman

Jane Nangle
Constantia Gage
Mrs. Beechinor (Lord Bapchild's aunt)
Pamela Beechinor
Catherine, Lady Bapchild (Lord Bapchild's mother)
Mrs. Bostock
Miss Bostock
Mrs. Pawsey
Miss Dodd
Miss Bowater
Trendell

757146

(The following is a copy of the original play-bill of "The Manœuvres of Jane".)

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

Sole Lessee—Mr. Frederick Harrison. *Managers*—Mr. Frederick Harrison and Mr. Cyril Maude.

To-night, Saturday, October 29th, 1898, at 8.10, will be presented, for the first time,

An Original Comedy, in four Acts, called

THE MANŒUVRES OF JANE

by HENRY ARTHUR JONES.

LORD BAPCHILD	MR. CYRIL MAUDE
JERVIS PUNSHON, his uncle, of the Lodge, Chaney .	MR. FREDERICK HARRISON
GEORGE LANGTON . . .	MR. C. M. HALLARD
MR. NANGLE	MR. W. G. ELLIOT
THE REV. PREBENDARY BOSTOCK	MR. HOLMAN CLARK
MR. PAWSEY	MR. F. H. TYLER
SIR ROBERT BOWATER . .	MR. SYDNEY VALENTINE
BUTLER	MR. CLARENCE BLAKISTON
FOOTMEN	MR N. HOLTHOIR MR. H. H. WELTCH
CONSTANTIA GAGE . . .	MISS GERTRUDE KINGSTON
MRS. BEECHINOR, Lady Bapchild's sister . . .	MISS ROSE LECLERCQ
PAMELA BEECHINOR . .	MISS BEATRICE FERRAR
LADY BAPCHILD, Lord Bapchild's mother . . .	MRS. E. H. BROOKE
MRS. BOSTOCK	MISS FANNY HOLLAND
MISS BOSTOCK	MISS LINDSAY
MRS. PAWSEY	MISS R. VERNON PAGET
MISS DODD	MISS ADELA MEASOR
MISS BOWATER	MISS MURIEL BEAUMONT
TRENDELL	MISS IRENE FITZGERALD
JANE NANGLE	MISS WINIFRED EMERY

ACT I.

SCENE—The River Parlour at Lord Bapchild's, Chaney Court, on an October afternoon.—Walter Hann.

ACT II.

SCENE—Drawing-room at Chaney Court on an April afternoon, six months later.—Joseph Harker.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—Room in the "Magpie" at Southwich at eleven o'clock on the same evening.—Joseph Harker.

SCENE II.—Miss Dodd's Parlour at Pilstow-on-sea at seven o'clock the next morning.—Joseph Harker.

ACT IV.

SCENE—Drawing-room at Chaney Court. The same morning.—Joseph Harker.

—

TIME—The Present.

ACT I

SCENE—THE RIVER PARLOUR AT CHANEY COURT. A bright, pleasant room in an old English mansion. An octagonal window is thrown out at the back on the right. It gives a view of the estuary of the river Chaney, at this point nearly a mile wide, and the opposite shore, a flat meadow land. A large ingle-nook with small fire burning takes up the left half of the stage at the back. A door on the right up stage close to the window. A door on the left up stage close to the ingle-nook. A large comfortable rocking-chair down stage left centre. A footstool. Other furniture as required.

TIME—An October afternoon.

Enter FOOTMAN, *right, showing in* JERVIS PUNSHON, *a shrewd, polished Englishman of the best club and country-gentleman type, about fifty years of age.*

JERVIS. Tell Mrs. Beechinor I must see her at once. Oh, here she is!

Enter, left, MRS. BEECHINOR, *sister to* JERVIS, *a year or two younger. Exit* FOOTMAN, *right.*

MRS. B. Jervis, what's the matter?

JERVIS. Nothing. (*Taking out opened telegram from pocket.*) I've just had this telegram from Nangle.

(*Giving telegram to* MRS. BEECHINOR.)

MRS. B. (*reading telegram*). "Am bringing my daughter and Miss Gage by afternoon train. Hope Mrs. Beechinor will be able to receive them, as I am suddenly called to the Cape. Please ask Lord and Lady Bapchild to excuse informality.—RICHARD NANGLE." (*Giving back telegram.*)

JERVIS. (*putting telegram in pocket*). Now, my dear Agatha, the whole game is in your hands.

MRS. B. Game?

JERVIS. The girl will be immensely rich. She's his only daughter. Her mother died when she was a baby. Nangle has been very busy and has neglected her a good deal. The consequence is that the young lady has been thoroughly spoilt. She ought to have been brought out two or three years ago, but Nangle was out at the Cape and had nobody who could present her.

MRS. B. Where has she been educated?

JERVIS. Everywhere. She ran away from one school, and Nangle was politely requested to take her away from another——

MRS. B. She cannot be a nice girl, Jervis.

JERVIS. Oh, it's only devilment and high spirits. She has got the upper hand of every-

body, and now—well, now Nangle doesn't know what on earth to do with her.

MRS. B. So he wishes to pass her over to me.

JERVIS. My dear girl, you're confoundedly hard up.

MRS. B. I am.

JERVIS. Nangle will pay you any terms you like to name. I thought I was doing you a remarkably good turn when he asked my advice at the club the other day. "By Jove!" I said, "the very thing! My sister Agatha. A lady, a thorough woman of the world, a strict disciplinarian, kept a young ladies' school for six years——"

MRS. B. You didn't mention that——

JERVIS. That one of the girls ran away and married the drill-sergeant, and then the school smashed up! No, I didn't mention that.

MRS. B. It was an accident. It might happen to any schoolmistress. She was not a nice girl.

JERVIS. No. And the very fact of your having met with such a misfortune once, renders you immune for the future. Your whole system is thoroughly vaccinated with a knowledge of girls and their little ways.

MRS. B. It ought to be, after those six years.

(PAMELA BEECHINOR *sneaks in at door right, very quietly goes up to table,*

turns over papers, and listens. She is a raw, awkward girl, about fourteen, with irregular putty features, straight drab hair, round shoulders, a bad carriage, a habit of rubbing one hand in the other, and a constant appearance of being cold and comfortless. She is untidy and badly dressed.)

MRS. B. It seems that Catherine and Bapchild met Mr. Nangle at Pau a few years back.

JERVIS. Yes. Nangle was delighted when I said that you were living at Chaney Court with Lord and Lady Bapchild, and that probably it could be arranged for Miss Nangle and her companion to spend the winter here. Have you spoken to Catherine and Bapchild about it?

MRS. B. Yes. They hummed and ha'd, and as usual couldn't make up their mind.

JERVIS. We must make it up for them. (PAMELA *makes a little clatter at table.*) There's your girl again——

MRS. B. Pamela, what are you doing there?

PAM. Oh, mamma, there's a man in the library asking for Lord Bapchild——

MRS. B. What man?

PAM. Quite a nice young man—at least, I didn't look at him. I think he has come about the steward's place.

MRS. B. Well?

PAM. The servants can't find cousin Philibert, so I came to see if he was in here.

MRS. B. Run away. I wish to talk to Uncle Jervis.

PAM. Yes, mamma.

JERVIS. And break yourself of that very bad habit of listening. You'll get yourself into trouble some day.

PAM. Yes, Uncle. (*Exit, right.*)

MRS. B. Pamela is a dear child, a sweet child, but she is a little inquisitive.

JERVIS. Box her ears the next time you catch her at it. Well, Bapchild's our own nephew, Agatha, but he is the very biggest fool——

MRS. B. He is; but look at his mother.

JERVIS. Oh, Catherine's a fool, poor dear.

MRS. B. And his father was a fool.

JERVIS. And when two fools marry, the result is a progeny of d—ee—d fools in the next generation.

MRS. B. Oh, there's only one of him!

JERVIS. Thank heaven! Well, the property is already very much embarrassed. If he continues all his fads and schemes he'll ruin himself. His only chance is a good marriage. Why not marry him to Miss Nangle?

MRS. B. But would Mr. Nangle approve?

JERVIS. Nangle would be delighted. I hinted

it to him. He says the only chance of happiness for his daughter or himself, is to marry her to some dear good fellow who will allow her to hen-peck him for the rest of her life. Bapchild will do for that, eh?

MRS. B. But do you think I can manage her? Why had she to leave the school?

JERVIS. An epidemic of love letters among the girls. Miss Nangle was the ring-leader. Love-letters in the school desks. Love-letters on the sea-shore. The milkman bribed to carry love-letters. Love-letters flying over the wall to a boys' school. Love-letters embalmed in sausage rolls at the pastrycook's. Love-letters passing in hymn-books at church——

MRS. B. No! No! Jervis, I really can't have anything to do with her if she's a girl of that sort!

JERVIS. My dear Agatha, do you mean to tell me that your school-girls did'nt carry on the same game?

MRS. B. Don't ask me. My life those six years was one long agony of fear. What I did find out, I do know! What went on that I never found out, heaven only knows!

JERVIS. Well, then it's in very safe keeping, and I wouldn't trouble any farther about it!

Enter right, LADY BAPCHILD, *a plaintive, stout, flabby English lady, about fifty-five, very short of breath.*

JERVIS. Ah, Catherine! How are you?

LADY B. My breathing gets shorter and shorter——

JERVIS. Sit down. Sit down!

(*Getting her seated.*)

MRS. B. We have been talking about Bapchild——

LADY B. What's the matter with him now?

JERVIS. Everything. Why didn't you take my advice and send him to a public school and the 'Varsity like other boys?

LADY B. A public school, with his delicate constitution! He would never have survived it! And he has been much better educated under his tutors than at a public school.

JERVIS. A boy doesn't go to a public school to be educated! He goes to have the nonsense taken out of him, and to be made a man of.

LADY B. But Bapchild has always been so fond of his studies. He really knows almost everything!

MRS. B. Everything except what will be of use to him.

JERVIS. What does he know about the world? What does he know about men and women?

LADY B. I'm very thankful he doesn't. By keeping him at home at least I have kept him out of all temptations!

JERVIS. Kept him out of all temptations!

What on earth will become of him? I've just had this telegram from Nangle. He's bringing Miss Nangle and Miss Gage down by the afternoon train. (*Giving telegram to* LADY BAPCHILD.)

MRS. B. Who is this Miss Gage?

JERVIS. She was a teacher at the school when Miss Nangle—a—left. It seems she became involved in some way through befriending Miss Nangle. So, as Miss Gage is very poor and her mother is a widow, Miss Nangle insisted that Nangle should give Miss Gage a permanent post as companion.

LADY B. (*Having read telegram, gives it back to* JERVIS.) Well, what do you wish me to do?

JERVIS (*taking telegram*). Invite the two girls here and make things pleasant for them.

LADY B. But Bapchild says they will disturb him——

JERVIS. So much the better! This Miss Nangle is a lively, handsome girl, and very rich. She would make an admirable match for Bapchild.

LADY B. I suppose Bapchild must marry some day. If he only chooses the right girl!

JERVIS. The right girl is now on her way from town. And if you don't help Agatha and me to bring this off, upon my word, Catherine, I'll take him over to Paris, and I'll lose him there with

three or four hundred pounds in his pocket! Oh, here he is!

Enter, right, LORD BAPCHILD, *a very precise, pedantic young man, with nervous, finicky manner, a high irregular forehead, slightly bulging on one side, scrupulously neat and prim, hair brushed very straight, pince-nez.*

LORD B. Ah, uncle! (*Shaking hands.*)

JERVIS. How are you?

LORD B. I am in a situation of great perplexity. Crosby left me last week——

JERVIS. A great pity! The best steward the estate has ever had.

LORD B. Yes, but when I found him kissing Miss Belward, what could I do?

JERVIS. Shut your eyes.

LORD B. Shut my eyes while my steward kisses all my tenants' daughters!

JERVIS. All?

LORD B. Well, two at least. No! I spoke to him, and he said he was engaged to her. "Of course," I said, "that puts a different complexion on the matter. I do not object to a moderate amount of kissing between engaged couples on the Bapchild estate," I said. "But I would prefer that it should be conducted in as private and seemly a manner as possible."

JERVIS. Well?

LORD B. The very next week I discovered him kissing Miss Cheadle.

JERVIS. Crosby was an active fellow. Perhaps he was engaged to both of them.

LORD B. Really, uncle——

JERVIS. My dear Bapchild, you've lost a very good steward, and I don't know where you will replace him.

LORD B. There is a promising young man in the next room. I should like you to see him, mother.

MRS. B. But we are expecting some very important visitors.

LORD B. Visitors?

MRS. B. Mr. Nangle and his daughter, and her companion.

LORD B. Oh, yes, you were proposing that they should stay here.

MRS. B. For a short time. You know my circumstances, ever since my poor husband's misfortunes. Mr. Nangle proposes to pay very handsomely for a suitable chaperon. You would be doing me a great favour.

LORD B. (*uneasily, a little alarmed*). I should be delighted to oblige you, but, you see, all my day is so exactly portioned out, and also everything now works so smoothly, that I fear Miss Nangle might possibly introduce a disturbing element into the household——

MRS. B. Oh, no! She's not a girl who would do that—eh, Jervis?

JERVIS. Not at all. Miss Nangle is a most charming girl.

MRS. B. A girl in a thousand! A really nice girl!

LORD B. Ye-es. I think we will now go into the matter of the steward. (*Makes a dash at door right, opens it, calls off.*) Mr. Langton!

(MRS. BEECHINOR *and* JERVIS *exchange shrugs and glances.*)

Enter door, right, GEORGE LANGTON, *a very handsome young fellow about twenty-eight, in riding dress; very frank and engaging manners of the gentleman-farmer class.*

GEORGE. Yes, my lord.

LORD B. (*Introducing.*) Mr. Langton—my mother, Lady Bapchild.

GEORGE. How d'ye do?

LADY B. How d'ye do?

(*Bows exchanged.*)

LORD B. My aunt, Mrs. Beechinor. (*Bows exchanged between* MRS. BEECHINOR *and* GEORGE.) My uncle, Mr. Jervis Punshon.

JERVIS. (*Shaking hands.*) How d'ye do? Any connection of the Castle Baybridge Langtons?

GEORGE. Yes, I'm a great-grandson of Breakneck Georgie.

LORD B. You have been engaged in looking after your father's estate?

GEORGE. Yes, he had a little property, but it all went to pieces in the agricultural depression. So now I've got to look out for myself.

LORD B. You thoroughly understand all the business of an estate?

GEORGE. Thoroughly, my lord.

LORD B. The Bapchild estate is somewhat peculiar.

GEORGE. How, my lord?

LORD B. My late father made it a model estate. My ambition is to preserve that character for it. I should wish my steward to work with me in impressing this model character upon the estate and upon the tenantry.

GEORGE. (*A little uncomfortable.*) Yes, my lord.

LORD B. I should wish you to be extremely circumspect in your behaviour.

GEORGE. Yes, my lord. Towards whom?

LORD B. Towards everybody. My late steward was not circumspect, especially toward the tenants' daughters. Now, would you be circumspect?

GEORGE (*growing more uncomfortable*). Towards the tenants' daughters? Yes, my lord. I think so. I'd try.

LORD B. Ah, that is not enough for me. This is a most important point!

GEORGE. You want me to behave like a gentleman, I suppose?

LORD B. Yes, and also I should wish you, as my representative, to be in some sense a model to everybody on the estate.

GEORGE (*getting more and more uncomfortable*). I'd rather not promise to be a model to anybody, my lord, in case—in case it didn't come off.

PAMELA *enters, right, rather quickly.*

PAM. Some people have just driven up in the station fly. And one of the young ladies said—I wasn't listening, mamma, but I couldn't help hearing her say, "I'm sure I shall die if I stay a week in this hole!"

LORD B. This hole!!

PAM. Yes. And then she turned and shrieked out, "Oh, will somebody take me away?"

(*General consternation.* MRS. BEECHINOR *and* JERVIS *go towards door right and meet* FOOTMAN, *who enters with card on tray, which he gives to* LORD BAPCHILD.)

LORD B. (*taking card, reading*). Mr. Nangle ——
(GEORGE *shows delighted surprise.*)

LORD B. (*To* FOOTMAN.) Where are they?

FOOTMAN. In the library, my lord. One of the young ladies seems very indisposed, my lord.

MRS. B. Poor dear! I'll go to her. Jervis——

JERVIS. Certainly.

(*Exeunt* MRS. BEECHINOR *and* JERVIS, *right.*)

LORD B. Indisposed? What symptoms did she show?

FOOTMAN. Waved her arms about, my lord, and then dropped all of a heap on the sofa.

LORD B. There's a great deal of typhoid about. Mr. Langton, we will continue our interview in that room. (*Pointing left.*)

GEORGE (*coming right*). But if the young lady is ill—I've had a great deal of experience—with horses, and I——

LORD B. No, wait in that room. (GEORGE *goes reluctantly to door left.*) Pamela, you are especially liable to anything zymotic. Go to your room and stay there.

PAM. Yes, cousin. (*Exit* PAMELA, *right.*)

LORD B. (*To* GEORGE.) I'll come to you in a moment, Mr. Langton. (*Exit* GEORGE, *left.*)

JERVIS (*reëntering, right*). It's all right—only a little faintness. Come in, Nangle! Come in, Miss Gage! (*At door, right.*)

LADY BAPCHILD, *who has been sitting, rises.*

Enter right MR. NANGLE, *a warm-tempered, irritable, good-natured man about fifty, and* MISS CONSTANTIA GAGE, *a sly, demure girl about twenty-four.* FOOTMAN *waits until they have entered and then exit, right.*

LADY B. How d'ye do, Mr. Nangle?

NANGLE. How d'ye do, Lady Bapchild?

LADY B. I was just going to Miss Nangle.

JERVIS. No, better leave her to Agatha. (*Introducing.*) Miss Gage—Lady Bapchild.

LORD B. (*To* NANGLE.) How d'ye do? (*Shaking hands.*) I hope Miss Nangle's illness is not anything serious—such as typhoid.

NANGLE. Oh, no! To tell you the truth, it's temper.

LORD B. Oh, I'm so glad—so glad it's not serious.

NANGLE. Well, I won't say that, but it's temper, and nothing else.

JERVIS. Ah, my dear Nangle, you don't understand the art of managing young ladies. Now I consider your daughter one of the most charming young ladies I have ever met, and when Mrs. Beechinor has had her in hand for six months——

NANGLE. What then?

JERVIS. Miss Nangle will astonish you.

NANGLE. I'm sure she will. I wish you could promise me she wouldn't! You see, I'm frank.

JERVIS. Too frank! You are giving Lord Bapchild quite a wrong impression of Miss Nangle.

NANGLE. Lord Bapchild shall judge for himself.

LORD B. (*who has been listening with growing apprehension.*) Yes, I understand it is proposed that Miss Nangle and——

(*Glancing at* CONSTANTIA, *who, although she is talking to* LADY BAPCHILD, *immediately turns with the sweetest of smiles to* LORD BAPCHILD.)

NANGLE. (*Introducing.*) Lord Bapchild—Miss Gage.

CON. I'm so delighted, Lord Bapchild, to see Chaney Court. I've heard so much about your model farms and model cattle. Everything at Chaney is model, isn't it, even the pigs?

LORD B. We have a breed of pigs which may fairly claim that they are in some sense—a—quite model pigs.

CON. What dears they must be! I should so like to see them.

Enter MRS. BEECHINOR, *right.*

MRS. B. (*speaking off*). This way, dear. Do come in!

JANE NANGLE *enters very slowly and reluctantly, right; a bright, handsome girl about twenty-one, very passionate, impetuous, wilful, and high-spirited.*

MRS. B. (*introducing*). My sister, Lady Bapchild.

LADY B. How d'ye do? (*Shaking hands.*)

JANE (*very coldly and stiffly*). How d'ye do?

MRS. B. (*introducing*). My nephew, Lord Bapchild.

LORD B. (*shaking hands*). I hope you've recovered from your—attack.

JANE. No, I'm very much worse. I hope, Lady Bapchild, you won't think me rude, but I'm sure Chaney Court will never agree with me. I shall be a perfect misery to myself, and to everybody around me—(*glancing round*) especially to everybody around me.

NANGLE (*impatiently*). Nonsense, Jane, nonsense!

JANE. Father, it's true. It's only kind to let Lord and Lady Bapchild know that if I stay here, without in the least meaning it, I shall thoroughly upset the whole household.

LORD B. (*eagerly*). Then perhaps it would be advisable——

JANE (*cordially*). Yes, it would!

NANGLE. The real meaning of this nonsense

is that—Mrs. Beechinor, can I have a little private talk with you, and I will explain——

MRS. B. Certainly. Catherine——

LADY B. We always have tea on the terrace on fine afternoons. (*Looking out of window.*) They're taking it out. (*To* NANGLE.) We'll leave you and Mrs. Beechinor for your chat. Come, Bapchild. (*Exit, right.*)

(LORD BAPCHILD *and* CONSTANTIA *cross to right.*)

CON. (*who has been engaging* LORD BAPCHILD). Really! How wonderful—in a pig.

LORD B. Yes. The pig-nature is not in itself an admirable type——

CON. No, indeed.

LORD B. But the pig possesses certain attributes and possibilities——

CON. Ah, yes! How true! How very true!

(*Exeunt* LORD BAPCHILD *and* CONSTANTIA, *right.*)

JERVIS. Now, Miss Nangle, I'll take you to get a cup of tea.

JANE. Oh, I must stay and hear what my father and Mrs. Beechinor arrange. I am so anxious not to make you all uncomfortable.

JERVIS. Nangle, you'll find us on the terrace. (*Going off, right.*)

NANGLE. No, stay, Punshon. The truth is, Mrs. Beechinor, my daughter has been visiting in

Gloucestershire for the last two months, and she wishes to stay there because——

(*Looking gravely at* JANE.)

JANE. Because I like the neighbourhood. It's so nice and hilly.

JERVIS. You'll like this neighbourhood when you get used to it.

JANE. Oh, I'm sure I shan't! It's so flat. Look at the stupid, flat meadows, and the stupid, flat river. I hope you don't think I'm rude in calling your neighbourhood stupid, but you must have felt that about it yourselves, haven't you?

MRS. B. No! No!

JERVIS. Not more stupid than other neighbourhoods.

JANE. Oh, I'm so sorry I called it stupid. But I had quite a creepy-creepy sensation when I saw that long, winding river crawling along—under my very nose!

JERVIS (*a little sternly*). The river Chaney does not crawl, Miss Nangle. Owing to certain geographical conditions the Chaney just off this point is perhaps the swiftest tidal river in the kingdom.

JANE. Is it? Well, it gave me the creepy-creeps.

NANGLE. You may understand by this that my daughter doesn't wish to come to Chaney Court, because—(*suddenly bursting out*) what do you

think, Mrs. Beechinoi, of a young lady who receives clandestine letters, clandestine love-letters?

MRS. B. No nice girl would do such a thing.

NANGLE. What do you think of it, Punshon?

JERVIS (*very gravely*). I should hope that such conduct is impossible. Or, if possible, that it will never be repeated.

(*Looking sternly at* JANE.)

NANGLE. A week ago I discovered the torn half of a letter that my daughter had received——

MRS. B. From whom?

NANGLE. I don't know. The signature was torn off. But it was written in terms of such sickening and idiotic familiarity——

JANE. Idiotic? Have you forgotten how you used to write?

NANGLE. How I used to write?!

JANE. Just for fun Lady Charndon showed me some letters you wrote to her before you were engaged to mamma. Idiotic?! Ha!

NANGLE. The question is not what I wrote or how I wrote. Now, I give you one last chance, miss, who was the writer of that letter?

JANE. And Aunt Sarah told me all about you and the French governess, and how you behaved when you were young.

NANGLE. The question is not how I behaved when I was young. The question is how I can

stop you from behaving now that I am old, and want you to profit by my experience!

JANE. Oh, it's mean to profit by other people's experience after they have been at all the trouble of collecting it. I want to profit by my own!

NANGLE (*getting more angry*). Once more, who was the writer of that letter?

JANE. I felt quite upset at what Aunt Sarah told me. And she died three weeks after——

NANGLE. The old cat!

JANE. Oh! And she left you all her money! And how can you expect me to behave when I've no mother, and no Aunt Sarah, and only you to set me an example? And I know all about the young lady in the glove shop! (*Triumphantly.*)

NANGLE (*infuriated*). Really, this is too abominable! I——

(*Coming furiously towards* JANE.)

JERVIS (*interposing*). Leave her to Mrs. Beechinor. Come and get a cup of tea!

JANE. Yes, father, go and get a cup of tea!

NANGLE. No, I will not get a cup of tea. (*Speaking in a calm, measured, philosophical tone.*) I should like to ask, Punshon, why, in the mysterious and incomprehensible designs of Providence, that young lady was allotted to me for daughter?

JERVIS. Ah, that's what most of us would like to ask—about our relations.

NANGLE (*proceeding*). I am not conscious of having done anything to deserve such an affliction. And I do foresee, Mrs. Beechinor—(*speaking very solemnly*)—a very grave danger for this country in the present fashion of bringing up children, and their behaviour to their parents.

MRS. B. Very true!

NANGLE. Why should those whose position as fathers entitles them to respect and obedience——

JERVIS. Quite so!

NANGLE. And whose wisdom and experience of life may fairly——

JANE. That's exactly the sermon you preached at me the day after I ran away from Miss Petherbridge. And it made me wicked for a fortnight, till I'd got it thoroughly out of my system!

NANGLE. (*Starts again furiously towards* JANE.) Really, I——

MRS. B. (*Interposes, calms him with a gesture.*) Shush! My dear Miss Nangle, this is most serious! Receiving clandestine letters from a young man! Are you conscious of what a terrible thing you are doing?

JANE. I told father that I love him with all my heart. I shall never love anybody else. He hasn't got a penny. I'm quite willing to wait. He doesn't mean to do anything wrong. I don't mean to do anything wrong. I meant to tell my father all about it, but he didn't go the right way.

He began by threatening me. Then I got angry, and father got angrier, and I got angrier still, and he stamped his foot, and I stamped mine, and he said I should tell him who he is, and I said I wouldn't, and when I've said I won't—well, I won't, and I *won't,* and I WON'T!!

NANGLE. Then I'll pack you off to a convent to-morrow morning.

JANE. They'll never keep me!

NANGLE. I won't leave you a farthing. I'll—I'll let you go your own way and marry this beggar.

JANE. (*Delighted.*) You will?!

NANGLE. No! You shall never marry him, you, you——

JANE. Ah! I know you're dying to call me a wicked name, but Mrs. Beechinor and Mr. Punshon are here, and you daren't, you daren't!

NANGLE. (*Calm again.*) Now, understand me, for your conduct to-day, you shall never marry this fellow, no, excuse me, Mrs. Beechinor—no, I'm damned if you shall! There! I've said it! Punshon, you heard me.

JERVIS. Don't be hasty. Suppose that——

NANGLE. Never! Mrs. Beechinor, I must go to the Cape to-morrow. If you like to take charge of her and her precious friend, whom I believe to be every bit as bad as she is——

JANE. Connie? She's ten times worse in her own way!

NANGLE. I will gladly pay you any sum you like to name and consider you are doing me an inestimable service. If you refuse—what will happen to them I don't know and I don't care. Punshon, is there any place where I could get a cigar and a spoonful of brandy?

JERVIS (*taking him off, right*). This way, old fellow.

(*Exit* NANGLE, *right.* JERVIS *turns round at door, exchanges a shrug and a grimace with* MRS. BEECHINOR *and exit, right.* MRS. BEECHINOR *and* JANE *are left alone for some moments.* MRS. BEECHINOR *is standing, moves a few paces, regards* JANE *furtively, gives indications of being undecided how to tackle* JANE. JANE *is seated and watches* MRS. BEECHINOR *furtively. At length* MRS. BEECHINOR *comes up to* JANE *in the friendliest way, and sits down beside her.*)

MRS. B. Now, my dear Jane, we are going to be great friends, aren't we?

JANE. Yes. If you'll take me away from here and live in Gloucestershire, I promise I'll be very good, and I won't do anything underhand or sly, and we shall get on splendidly together.

MRS. B. And if not?

JANE. We shan't begin to get on together at all, not a millionth part of an inch.

MRS. B. Oh!

JANE. I'm sure this place will never agree with me.

MRS. B. My dear Jane, whether this place agrees with you or no, you are going to stay here.

JANE (*rising*). Ah, you will keep me?

MRS. B. Yes. I'm going to accept your father's offer. I'm going to chaperon you, and I'm going to see that, while you are under my care, you behave yourself like any other young English lady. Why, you silly girl, do you think it's for no purpose that young ladies are looked after and watched, and guarded and guided? Do you think you can set yourself above all the rules that your grandmothers have found necessary for regulating society, and for securing the reputation and happiness of our sex, and the decency and honour of our homes?

JANE. Ah, my wise grandmothers! My grandmother never said I shouldn't live in Gloucestershire. She lived there herself.

MRS. B. Because her elders desired it. And she obeyed and respected them, as I intend you shall obey and respect me!

JANE. I won't obey you. I won't respect you!

MRS. B. Very well, my dear; then you must pretend to obey and respect me. That will do quite as well.

JANE. But I shall be thinking the most horrid things about you.

MRS. B. You can think them as much as you like, but you mustn't say them out. Outwardly at least, I am determined that you shall conform to the ordinary amenities of civilized society. Make no mistake, my dear Jane. There's no other course open to you.

JANE. Ha! No other course!

MRS. B. No, unless you are resolved to break through all the wholesome restraints that are imposed upon young ladies, and own yourself a thoroughly worthless and abandoned girl, outside all safeguards, outside respectability, outside society, outside morality, outside religion, outside home, outside everything that all good women cling to and value. And I don't think you are wicked enough, or mad enough to do that!

JANE. I'm wicked enough to live in Gloucestershire! And mad enough!

MRS. B. You will not live in Gloucestershire! You will live here.

JANE. I won't! I won't! Or if I do—Ha! —won't you be glad to get rid of me? Ask Miss Petherbridge! She said she'd master me, or die. Ha! Ha! Ha! In less than a week she came and

begged me to be her friend, and cried over me, and gave me her mother's parasol, and wanted to pray over me! Ha! Ask her! Ha! Ha!

MRS. B. My dear Jane, I shall not cry over you. I shall not give you my mother's parasol. And I'm sure I shan't pray over you. I shall do nothing so foolish. But I intend you shall live here peaceably and happily with me for the next six months. So the sooner you settle yourself to what is inevitable the better. Think it over, my dear! Think it over! (*Exit, right.*)

(JANE, *enraged, goes to door after her, makes a very angry, expressive gesture behind her back as she goes off, comes down stage, throws herself in a burst of rage into the rocking-chair. The door left, opens very cautiously, and* GEORGE *just shows his head, and whispers,* "Janie.")

JANE (*jumping up, with a shriek of delighted surprise*). Georgie! (*Going to him.*) Georgie!

GEORGE (*whispering*). Shush! Are you alone?

(*He enters the room.*)

JANE. Yes. Oh, Georgie, is it you?!

(*She falls hysterically into his arms.*)

GEORGE. Shush! (*The entire scene is conducted in swift, cautious tones, with constant apprehension and looking round on the part of both.*) Why didn't you answer my last letter?

JANE. Father found half of it, and dragged us up to London at once.

GEORGE. He knows——

JANE. Yes; but he doesn't know who you are. What are you doing here?

GEORGE. I've answered Lord Bapchild's advertisement for a steward.

JANE. You are to be Lord Bapchild's steward?

GEORGE. I think I stand a very good chance. But he wants me to promise to be a model to half the county——

JANE. Oh, promise him! Promise him! Promise him anything he asks you.

GEORGE. I will! I will! What brings you here?

JANE. Father has brought Connie and me here to put us in the care of a horrid Mrs. Beechinor. She's Lord Bapchild's aunt. And I think they want me to be Lady Bapchild.

GEORGE. But you won't, Janie?

JANE. I'll never be anybody's but yours. And I'm yours as soon as you like to claim me.

GEORGE. I'll claim you as soon as I've got four walls and a roof to cage you in, and a mouthful of bread and cheese to feed you on. Will you have me, Janie, with a cottage, and bread and cheese?

JANE. Yes, bread without the cheese! And a cottage without any walls, or floor, or roof! Any-

thing, anywhere, with you, Georgie! Oh, Georgie, I'm so glad to see you. Why aren't you glad to see me?

GEORGE. I am. But isn't it a little dangerous? I mustn't be seen.

JANE. No. Let's think what we can do.

GEORGE. I should like to go straight to your father and tell him——

JANE. Oh, that would ruin everything! He has just sworn that I shall never marry you. We must let him be for a long while, and then I'll worry him into giving his consent. And, if he won't, I'll marry you without it.

GEORGE. You will?

JANE. There's my hand. (*He takes it and kisses it.*) I'll never go back from my word. But if you are to stay here, it mustn't be known that we are engaged.

GEORGE. No, I suppose. We won't do anything dishonourable——

JANE. No, but nobody must know, except Connie. She'll help us; and, Georgie—if I were to pretend that I rather liked Lord Bapchild?

GEORGE. Why?

JANE. Then they would never suspect that I cared for you. We should be able to see each other every day, without their guessing, eh?

GEORGE. I don't like deceiving anybody——

JANE. Oh, I hate deceit. But if we don't shut

Mrs. Beechinor's eyes—George, we aren't doing anything wrong?

GEORGE. No! No! At least, when I'm with you, I don't care whether it's right or wrong.

JANE. Ah, no; say it's right.

GEORGE. It can't be wrong to love as we do. It can't be wrong to hold in my arms the dearest, daintiest, prettiest, most wonderful piece of God's work——

JANE. Am I? Am I that to you? Say it over again! No, say a lot of other pretty things!

GEORGE. You are everything, you have everything that was ever given to a woman to make a man beside himself with love and worship of her. I love you.

(*Kissing her.* PAMELA *enters, right, to see her in his arms. They fall apart.*)

PAM. (*Stands looking at them.*) I came to fetch Lady Bapchild's footstool. I wasn't listening, but I heard what you said just now.

JANE. What did you hear?

PAM. (*taking up footstool, going off, right*). And it's my duty to tell mamma.

(JANE *points* GEORGE *to stop her.*)

GEORGE (*intercepting* PAMELA). Just one moment, young lady.

JANE. Put down that footstool! (PAMELA *puts it down. Jane takes* PAMELA *by the arms.*) Do you know where listeners go to? I once knew

a naughty, wicked girl who listened, and she had to be taken and shaken—(*shaking* PAMELA)—and shaken till all the wickedness was shaken out of her. And she had Saint Vitus's dance ever after. Now—(*another good shake*)—what did you hear?

PAM. You said——

JANE (*shaking her*). No, I didn't. Your ears deceived you. Eh?

PAM. I heard you say——

JANE (*giving her a violent shake*). Oh, you naughty, wicked girl! What will become of you? You didn't see or hear anything! Eh? (*Shake.*) Eh?

PAM. No, Miss Nangle.

GEORGE (*who has been keeping guard at door*). Lord Bapchild! (*Crosses and exit left.*)

JANE (*pushing* PAMELA *left, and shaking her*). And if you ever dare to tell naughty, wicked stories, and say that you heard me speaking to that gentleman, I shall have to take you, and shake you, and shake you, till I've shaken all the wickedness out of you, and Saint Vitus's dance into you, you naughty, naughty, wicked girl!

(*Throwing her into rocking chair, as* CONSTANTIA *and* LORD BAPCHILD *enter, right.*)

CON. (*Very sweet and ingratiating.*) And

all the model farms are on the other side of the river? How far is it across?

LORD B. Nearly a mile. Seven furlongs and fourteen yards, to be precise.

CON. And do you prefer sailing or rowing across?

LORD B. I'm very fond of rowing.

CON. Perhaps you're a good oarsman.

LORD B. Moderately. Do you row at all?

CON. Not much. But I steer very well.

LORD B. As one approaches the middle of the river, the landscape gradually unfolds on both sides for several miles and shows the whole of the Bapchild estate.

CON. What an exquisite view! You are fond of nature?

LORD B. Yes, I am moderately fond of nature. (JANE *is making grimaces behind* LORD BAPCHILD'S *back, and making signs to* CONSTANTIA *to take him away.*) But last summer, as we were rowing back from the farms, we got caught by the tide and we were carried down the stream for miles——

CON. How awkward!

LORD B. Yes, we might have been taken out to sea and drowned. As it was, we were without food for several hours, and when one is very hungry the landscape doesn't appeal to one, does it? No!

CON. And do you superintend all these model farms yourself——

LORD B. Yes, largely. My steward—I had forgotten! There is a young man waiting for me. Excuse me. (*Exit, left.*)

(JANE *has been impatiently listening to* LORD BAPCHILD, *threatening* PAMELA *in dumb show, and making signs to* CONSTANTIA *to get rid of* LORD BAPCHILD.)

JANE. You're quite sure you didn't see or hear anything? (*Taking* PAMELA *up to window.*)

PAM. (*obediently*). Yes, quite sure.

JANE. Go to the window and stay there! (PAMELA *goes up.* JANE *comes down to* CONSTANTIA, *seizes her hand, whispers.*) Connie, he's in there! (*Pointing left.*)

CON. Who?

JANE. My Georgie! (CONSTANTIA *starts with surprise.*) Hush!

Enter MRS. BEECHINOR, NANGLE, *and* JERVIS, *right.*

MRS. B. (*Very dignified.*) Now, my dear Jane, we have come for your answer. Have you thought it over?

JANE. Oh, Mrs. Beechinor, I'm so sorry I was rude. I will stay here and do as you wish.

MRS. B. (*very warmly*). My dear child!

JANE. I begin to love the place already!

MRS. B. (*quite touched*). My dear, dear Jane!

NANGLE. Well, I'm astonished!

JERVIS. What did I tell you? The most wonderful creature with girls!

MRS. B. I have never known my method to fail with a really nice girl!

LORD B. (*entering left, speaking off*). Very well, Mr. Langton. (*Shuts door, left.*) I shall engage this Mr. Langton for steward. He has given me the most satisfactory assurances.

MRS. B. Bapchild, Miss Nangle has accepted your invitation——

LORD B. Delighted! (*Very nervously.*)

MRS. B. (*Quite overcome.*) And I am sure, my dear Jane, you are going to be very, very happy, at Chaney Court!

JANE (*flinging her arms round* MRS. BEECHINOR). I'm quite sure I am!

(PAMELA *stands with open mouth.*)

CURTAIN.

(*Six months pass between Acts I. and II.*)

ACT II

SCENE—DRAWING-ROOM AT CHANEY COURT. A very large, handsome, beautifully furnished room. Door up stage, right. Door left centre. Fireplace down stage, right. The whole of the back of the stage is taken up by long windows which lead into a conservatory. Beyond conservatory, outer windows look upon the same river landscape as the room of the first Act.

TIME—An April evening about six.

Discover CONSTANTIA GAGE. JANE *enters from conservatory.*

JANE. (*Comes impetuously to* CONSTANTIA.) Oh, Connie, do tell me what I am to do!

CON. Read your father's letter again.

JANE. (*Takes out letter from pocket, reads it.*) "Plymouth, Tuesday morning. I thought from the accounts Mrs. Beechinor has sent me that you had recovered from this folly. But from your letter I gather that you are as infatuated as ever. Please understand that I am thoroughly resolved you shall never marry this beg-

gar, whoever he may be; and unless you are prepared to make a suitable marriage in England under Mrs. Beechinor's guidance, I shall take you back to the Cape with me next month. As you particularly wish it, I will not communicate with Mrs. Beechinor on the subject until I see her. I shall reach Chaney Court on Wednesday night"—

CON. That's to-night!

JANE. Yes—"or Thursday at latest, and we will then have a thorough understanding on the matter." That comes of trusting your father!

CON. Why did you write to him about it?

JANE. Georgie pressed me. Georgie is so strictly honourable, so am I—at heart! Oh, Connie, what am I to do?

CON. Why do anything? Let things stay as they are.

JANE. But I can't. Georgie has got this splendid offer from California, and he wants to start at once. If he goes, he will be in a magnificent position in two years.

CON. Well, let him go, and then go out and marry him.

JANE. Let him go amongst those Californian girls for two years! No, he shan't go out alone.

CON. It is rather awkward.

JANE. Awkward?! The moment my father comes here he'll tell Mrs. Beechinor that I'm still in love with the unknown beggar, and then our

whole bubble will burst. Besides, I can't keep on pretending to be fond of Lord Bapchild. How can you wish to be Lady Bapchild?

CON. I haven't a single penny, or a single prospect in the world. I don't pretend to have any violent liking for Lord Bapchild, but if you marry your Georgie, what's to become of me?

JANE. You shall always share our home, however humble it may be!

CON. No, thank you. I don't like humble homes. There's always a latent perfume of poverty and onions about them. No! It would suit me so much better to be mistress here, and I'm sure it would be the very best thing that could happen to Lord Bapchild.

JANE. To marry you?

CON. I could manage him so nicely. I'd keep him from squandering all his money on these senseless fads.

JANE. You'll never make anything but a fool of him.

CON. I don't wish to. The next best thing to having a strong, wise man for a husband, is to have a weak, easy fool. I'm not sure whether it isn't the better of the two.

JANE. I wish you joy. But you seem to be bungling it.

CON. You haven't helped me as you might.

JANE. Not helped you? Oh!

CON. My dear Jane, you must own you are a little selfish.

JANE. I? Selfish? Oh, Connie! When I've done everything to bring you together. And the fibs, the shocking, dreadful, wicked, outrageous fibs that I've told him about you.

CON. Ah, what?

JANE. That you were the sweetest, most devoted daughter——

CON. So I am.

JANE. Connie! When you can't live a week in the same house with your mother!

CON. Nobody ever could. What else?

JANE. That the man who marries you will find he has a perfect treasure.

CON. He will find that true. What else?

JANE. That you had the most beautiful, open, candid nature.

CON. Well, haven't I?

JANE. My dear Connie, you are sly

CON. I? Sly?!

JANE. Yes. You may not know it, dear, but you are fearfully sly.

CON. And what are you? Look at the way you've been hoodwinking and deceiving Mrs. Beechinor, and Mr. Punshon, and Lady Bapchild, and everybody the last six months.

JANE. Yes, but that has been necessary. You're sly by nature, Connie. I'm only sly be-

cause circumstances force me. You're sly, and like it! I'm sly and hate it! I hate it so much that—(*comes to* CONSTANTIA, *mysteriously*)—Connie——

CON. Well?

JANE. Georgie said last night that if my father wouldn't listen to reason there was only one course to pursue.

CON. What?

JANE. Elope! And get married at once. Connie, sit down, and write to Georgie—(*rings bell*)—and I'll send Trendell across to the farms with it.

CON. Jane, you don't mean to elope!

JANE. Do as I tell you! If you don't I won't help you.

Enter FOOTMAN, *right.*

JANE. Will you please send Trendell to me at once? (*Exit* FOOTMAN.)

CON. (*Has reluctantly seated herself at table.*) Red Pepper, I suppose?

JANE. Yes?

CON. (*writing*). "Dear Mr. Langton, we are very anxious about Red Pepper. We should be so glad to hear that he is better."

(*Folding letter in envelope, addressing it.*)

Enter left, LADY BAPCHILD *and* MRS. BEECHINOR. *Both the girls show a little confusion.*

MRS. B. Is anything the matter?

JANE. No. We are so anxious about Red Pepper——

CON. I've written a note to Mr. Langton to ask how he is.

Enter JERVIS, *right.*

JERVIS. How d'ye do, everybody? (*Bowing.*) I've been over to the farms. Just had a look at Red Pepper. He's very much better. Langton and the vet. say he'll pull through.

(JANE *and* CONSTANTIA *look at each other.*)

Enter right, TRENDELL, JANE'S *maid.*

JANE. (*After a little confusion.*) Oh, Trendell, will you get one of the men to row you across to the farm, and give that note to Mr. Langton—

TREN. Yes, Miss.

(*Advancing to take note from* CONSTANTIA.)

MRS. B. I thought, Miss Gage, you said you were writing to Mr. Langton about Red Pepper?

CON. Yes, but——

MRS. B. Didn't you hear Mr. Punshon say that he was very much better?

CON. Did he? Oh, yes.

JANE. Never mind, Trendell.

(*Exit* TRENDELL, *right.*)

MRS. B. There's no further cause for anxiety about Red Pepper?

JERVIS. No, I think not.

CON. Then I can destroy my note.

(*Tears up note.* JANE *and* CONNIE *are disconcerted.*)

Enter FOOTMAN, *right, with telegram on tray, which he takes to* MRS. BEECHINOR. *He then returns to door, right, and exit.*

(MRS. BEECHINOR *takes telegram and opens it. Meantime* JANE *is making signs to* CONSTANTIA *to go off.* JERVIS *notices the signs, but gives no indication to the others.*)

MRS. B. (*Having read telegram.*) My dear Jane, from your father. He says, "Shall not be able to catch the train to Chaney direct, but hope to catch the Canchester express, arriving there eight thirty. Will then take boat across, reaching Chaney Court about ten."

JERVIS. Oh, Nangle's coming to-night?

MRS. B. And the Bostocks are coming also. They got back from Rome last week, so we asked them to stay the night and go to the athletic sports to-morrow.

(JANE *has gone stealthily into conservatory and off at back,* CONSTANTIA *goes off stealthily, right.*)

JERVIS. Oh, the Bostocks are coming to stay the night? What mischief are those two hussies up to now?

MRS. B. Mischief?

JERVIS. You have no cause for suspicion?

MRS. B. No. Jane is really everything that I could desire.

JERVIS. Hum! (*A little sniff.*)

MRS. B. We have never had the least word since that first afternoon.

JERVIS. Hum! (*A little sniff.*) I should keep my eyes open.

MRS. B. Oh, I do!

JERVIS. How are matters between her and Bapchild?

MRS. B. Just the same. I have sounded her feelings and she is quite disposed to accept him.

JERVIS. Then why doesn't it come off?

MRS. B. My dear Jervis, does anything ever come off, or come on, or go off, or go on, where Bapchild is concerned?

LADY B. Marriage is a very important step, and Bapchild is weighing it over very carefully. He argued it all out with me last evening.

JERVIS. Well, what decision did he arrive at?

LADY B. He didn't arrive at any decision. But his arguments on both sides were truly beautiful.

JERVIS. And while he's arguing some other fellow will snap up the girl. Where is he?

(*Rings bell.*)

LADY B. What are you going to do?

JERVIS. My dear Catherine, he's my only nephew and I'm going to make one last effort to save this fine old property from going to the dogs with his confounded fiddle-faddles.

Enter FOOTMAN, *right.*

JERVIS. Will you tell his lordship that I should like to speak to him?

FOOT. His lordship is now coming here, sir.

(*Exit* FOOTMAN, *right.*)

JERVIS. Leave me with him and I'll make him know his own mind one way or the other.

MRS. B. Catherine, we'll just see if the Bostocks's rooms are quite ready.

LADY B. Jervis, if you disarrange Bapchild's mind, I feel sure you'll bring about some serious catastrophe.

JERVIS. I mean to. And that catastrophe is his marriage.

MRS. B. Give him a thorough good rousing.

JERVIS. I mean to.

(*Exeunt* LADY BAPCHILD *and* MRS. BEECHINOR *through conservatory and off left as* LORD BAPCHILD *enters right.*)

LORD B. Ah, uncle!

JERVIS. How do? The time is come for a little plain speaking, Bapchild.

LORD B. On what subject?

JERVIS. Your relations with Miss Nangle. You really mustn't trifle with her feelings any longer!

LORD B. Trifle with her feelings? I have been most careful to keep on a footing of the strictest propriety.

JERVIS. You've been six months in the company of a charming girl, and you haven't made any advances to her?

LORD B. Advances?

JERVIS. Talked poetry, made love to her, kissed her?

LORD B. No, indeed.

JERVIS. Not put your arm round her waist?

LORD B. She is my guest.

JERVIS. Haven't tried to?

LORD B. Certainly not.

JERVIS. Well then, you ought to be thoroughly well ashamed of yourself.

LORD B. Really, uncle——

JERVIS. You have this magnificent property, and here is this young lady, beautiful, accomplished, rich, only waiting for one word from you to fall into your arms.

LORD B. I am giving the matter every consideration.

JERVIS. Consideration! Do something, my dear boy, do something!

LORD B. Well, I have—a——

JERVIS. What?

LORD B. As we returned from boating one evening, I did—a—I pressed her hand somewhat warmly, and at the same time I smiled.

JERVIS. Well?

LORD B. She did smile back.

JERVIS. Well? What then?

LORD B. That's all.

JERVIS. That's all? You didn't follow it up?

LORD B. No. You see, I have not definitely decided whether I wish to marry, and also I am not sure whether Miss Nangle possesses all those qualities which are desirable in my wife.

JERVIS. What possible objection can you have to her?

LORD B. Since she came the house has been considerably disturbed. She is very lively——

JERVIS. Lively! Lively!

LORD B. Yes. I imagine her husband will be made somewhat uncomfortable at times. Yes!

JERVIS. Bapchild, this is too bad! You have led this poor girl to believe——

LORD B. No! No!

JERVIS. Yes! Yes! You pressed her hand,

you smiled at her. And your Aunt Agatha says she is very deeply attached to you.

LORD B. Is she? Poor girl!

JERVIS. Poor girl!! For heaven's sake, my dear boy, do something!

LORD B. (*indecisively*). Well—a—what can I do?

JERVIS. You wish to marry her, eh?

LORD B. In some respects I do, in other respects I do not.

JERVIS. Nonsense. Allow me to be the best judge of what your feelings really are. I'm quite sure you wish to marry her. Well then, my dear boy, do something! For heaven's sake, do something!

LORD B. Well, what can I do?

JERVIS. Her father's coming back to-night. He can't get the direct train to Chaney, so he takes the Canchester express—gets there eight thirty. Now, after his long absence, it would be a very graceful little attention to him and to her if you were to row her over to meet him.

LORD B. But the Bostocks are coming.

JERVIS. They'll excuse you. I'll take your place at dinner. You shall row Miss Nangle across to Canchester, order a little dinner to be ready at the "Bull" for you and Nangle and Jane; and—my dear Bapchild, the lovely moonlight, the rippling waters, the nightingales warbling their

loudest, and a beautiful girl beside you in the boat, with five hundred thousand sovereigns in her dear little pockets—what a chance, what a chance!

LORD B. (*brightening a little*). Oh, I assure you I am fully sensible——

JERVIS. Well then, will you take advantage of it and propose to her to-night?

LORD B. (*nervously*). Well, perhaps I——

JERVIS (*very firmly*). Will you propose to her to-night?

LORD B. (*nervously*). Yes, yes I will.

(JANE *enters at back into conservatory, stands there looking off at back.*)

JERVIS. That's right. (*Calls to* JANE.) Miss Nangle! (*As* JANE *is coming down to them.*) And let Nangle find it all fixed up on his arrival. Mrs. Beechinor has prepared him for the news.

JANE *enters from conservatory.*

JERVIS. Lord Bapchild has had a most happy inspiration.

JANE. No? Really?

JERVIS. He thinks, as you have not seen your father for so long, it would be a delightful surprise if he were to row you over to meet him——

JANE. Oh, that would be delightful. But

aren't the Bostocks coming? And I do want to meet the Bostocks.

JERVIS. Oh, you'll see them to-morrow. That's a very charming thought of yours, Bapchild, to row Miss Nangle across. You ought to start in half an hour. I must get back home and dress, and be here to take your place at dinner. Au revoir, Miss Nangle.

JANE (*looking off at back*). Au revoir, Mr. Punshon.

(*Exit* JERVIS *with a meaning look and nod at* LORD BAPCHILD *to encourage him.*)

LORD B. (*Left alone with* JANE, *regards her nervously.*) I think we shall have a very pleasant row this evening.

JANE. Yes, if Connie is agreeable.

LORD B. Connie? Miss Gage?

JANE. Of course Connie will go with us.

LORD B. Oh!

JANE. You don't dislike Connie?

LORD B. Oh, no. I think she is quite estimable, every way.

JANE. She is! The dearest, sweetest creature! Oh, if I were to tell you all I know about that girl!

LORD B. Indeed!

JANE. So good to her widowed mother!

LORD B. Is she? That is scarcely a reason for taking her on the river with us!

JANE. No, perhaps not. Still, she is good to her mother.

LORD B. (*very nervously and tentatively*). I thought perhaps you might like to go with me—alone, eh?

JANE. Oh, I should! I should like it above all things! But you know how the people about here gossip, and you have always set them such a high example, haven't you?

LORD B. Yes, I have.

JANE. And then the Bostocks are coming. Mrs. Bostock is very particular, isn't she?

LORD B. She is—a—rather——

JANE. Well then, why shock her? No, dear Lord Bapchild, I'm sure it will be far better for Connie to go with us.

CONNIE *enters from conservatory.*

JANE. Connie, Lord Bapchild has made the most delightful suggestion——

CON. (*beaming on* LORD BAPCHILD). Ah! Yes?

JANE. That he should row us across to Canchester to-night to meet my father.

CON. How lovely!

JANE. I'm not quite sure we can go——

CON. Oh, yes, we can.

JANE. No, Connie, I'm not sure. What time does the train arrive, Lord Bapchild?

LORD B. About half-past eight, I believe.

JANE. Would you mind getting the "Bradshaw" so that we can be quite sure?

LORD B. Yes—I was about to say—(*glancing at* CONNIE)—I'll get the "Bradshaw."

(*Exit* LORD BAPCHILD.)

CON. Georgie has come over.

JANE. Where is he?

CON. Just outside the conservatory. (JANE *is about to rush off. Stopping her.*) Jane, you will manage this row with Lord Bapchild to-night.

JANE (*wanting to rush off at back*). I must see Georgie first. If he insists on making a bold plunge, of course I must do what he says.

CON. You are selfish, horribly selfish!

JANE. But it's the turning point in my life.

CON. So it is in mine. You've got your Georgie—won't you help me just this once?

JANE. How?

CON. Just as we are starting be ill or something, and let Lord Bapchild row me over instead.

JANE. Very well. I'll think of something. I daresay we can bluff him into taking you alone.

(LORD BAPCHILD *enters left with "Bradshaw."* GEORGE *appears in conservatory at back.* JANE *sees him, makes a*

sign to him to go off left; he does so, making a sign to her to follow.)

LORD B. (*immersed in "Bradshaw"*). Yes—Canchester arrive, eight thirty.

JANE. Oh! Well, then, Connie, will you talk it over with Lord Bapchild, and I'll go and see how the weather is. (*Going into conservatory.*) There isn't much wind! We shall have to row across.

(*Exit left in conservatory after* GEORGE. LORD BAPCHILD *has been fidgeting and nervous, puts "Bradshaw" on the table.*)

CON. Is anything the matter, Lord Bapchild?

LORD B. No! No! Why?

(*Looking after* JANE.)

CON. You seem unsettled. And you are usually so calm and self-possessed.

LORD B. Am I?

CON. I was saying to Jane, "What a calm, strong man Lord Bapchild is!"

LORD B. (*Pleased.*) Ah!

CON. And so far-seeing.

LORD B. Yes, I am far-seeing.

CON. It seems a stupid thing to ask you, but —you have always lived a retired country life—where did you get all your wisdom from?

LORD B. I had several remarkable tutors.

CON. Oh, no tutors could have made you what you are.

LORD B. (*complacently*). No, no. Perhaps not. You see, some people seem to be born with a natural aptitude for wisdom. On the other hand, some people seem to be born with a natural aptitude for folly.

CON. How true! How constantly one meets with people of that class!

LORD B. (*modestly*). I was perhaps born with some little natural aptitude for wisdom, and by diligently cultivating it, I have attained to my present development of character. But—(*looking nervously around after* JANE)—we are talking about myself.

CON. Oh, do go on. We couldn't talk about anything more interesting to me. I mean——

(*Stops, confused, plays with a locket from which she lets fall a withered flower.*)

LORD B. Really! (*Pause, looks at her, draws a little closer to her.*) Really! (*Draws a little closer, then very insinuatingly.*) You will come for the row with Miss Nangle and me?

CON. Do you wish it? (*Very intensely.*) Do you really wish it?

LORD B. Yes——

(*Drawing back as she approaches him; he rises, very nervous and cautious.*)

CON. Ah! Take care! Don't step on my poor little flower!

(LORD BAPCHILD *picks up the flower.*)

CON. Give it to me. I value it because——

LORD B. Because?

CON. Do you remember the day when we went over to the model farms in the early spring?

(*As he gives her the flower their hands meet, and he holds hers. A pause of great embarrassment.* CONSTANTIA *looks down.*)

LORD B. No. Did I—have I—? Eh?

CON. It is the primrose that you gathered that day and carelessly threw away in the mud. I have kept it ever since.

LORD B. (*Very much touched.*) Have you? Do you—I—(*stands in an agony of indecision, holding her hand, looks at her, looks at her hand, is about to say something tender, then is about to kiss her hand; at length a wave of resolution passes over him, and he pulls himself together with the air of a man who has conquered a great temptation, drops her hand.*) I think I will now go and put on my serge sailor suit, as it is more commodious for boating.

(*Exit right very quickly.* CONSTANTIA *rises and makes a gesture of anger and*

annoyance after him. JANE *and* GEORGE *appear in conservatory from left and come cautiously into drawing-room.*)

JANE (*entering cautiously*). Is it all safe, Connie?

CON. Yes, I think so. (*To* GEORGE.) How d'ye do?

GEORGE. How d'ye do?

JANE. Connie, Georgie thinks, don't you——?

GEORGE. She has shown me her father's letter. If I leave her here and there is an explanation, he'll take her off, and then I shall lose her. There's only one thing to be done!

CON. What is that?

GEORGE. She is of age. She has promised me to trust herself entirely to me, and I have promised her she shall never repent it. We go up to London to-night, and to-morrow I make her my my wife.

JANE. Connie, you'll come with me? Hush! (*As she sees* PAMELA *sneak into conservatory. Calls out.*) You needn't stay there, darling. We can see you.

(PAMELA *enters from conservatory, amidst their embarrassment.*)

PAM. How's Red Pepper, Mr. Langton?

GEORGE. Very much better.

PAM. I'm so glad. Aren't you glad, Miss Nangle?

JANE. Of course I am.

PAM. You take a great interest in Red Pepper, don't you?

(*Pause. They all look at each other, disconcerted.*)

JANE. (*At length.*) Pamela, dear, you know that pretty silk blouse you admired in Green and Perkins' window?

PAM. The brocade or the check?

JANE. The brocade. If you like to walk down to the village and bring me a pair of pink evening gloves, for dinner to-night, I'll make you a present of the blouse. Will you go?

PAM. It will take over an hour.

JANE. Not if you go over the fields.

PAM. I liked the check blouse quite as much as the brocade.

JANE. Well, get them both, dear, and put them down to me.

PAM. Oh, you are kind.

JANE. Will you go, dear?

PAM. Yes, just to oblige you, I will.

JANE. Make haste, dear.

PAM. Oh, I'll make haste. (*Exit right.*)

JANE. (*Having watched her off, grinds her teeth, and makes an angry gesture after her.*)

Ugh! you horrid wretch! Now, Georgie, we have only a few minutes. When and where are we to start? You must arrange everything.

GEORGE. Ah, here's a "Bradshaw!"

(*He goes to table, takes up the "Bradshaw."* JANE *and* CONSTANTIA *crowd over his shoulders. They are all buried in its pages when door right suddenly opens and* PAMELA *puts her head in. They all start back, a little confused.*)

PAM. Six and three-quarters, isn't it, Miss Nangle?

JANE. No! No! Five and three-quarters.

PAM. How many buttons?

JANE. Ten, twelve, six—I don't mind. Make haste!

PAM. Oh, I will. I won't be gone very long.

(*Exit* PAMELA, *right. They again settle themselves over "Bradshaw."*)

GEORGE. Now, do we all go together, or separately?

JANE. Oh, not together. We should be seen and traced. We must leave the house separately, and arrange to meet somewhere—in some very unlikely place where nobody would think of looking for us.

CON. Don't forget, Jane, that I have prom-

ised Lord Bapchild to go over to Canchester with him.

JANE. Surely, Connie, you'll put that off and come with me?

CON. No, dear. I must keep my promise to Lord Bapchild, and I'll come with you after.

JANE. Oh, very well. But you are selfish, dear.

GEORGE (*busy over "Bradshaw"*). Do we go on this side the river from Chaney, or on the other side from Canchester?

JANE. I don't know. You must arrange it all. Only whatever we do, don't let us muddle it.

GEORGE. I've got it. The two lines of rail, one on each side the river, were evidently constructed for the purpose of bringing us together at Southwich Junction. And—good luck! for once in a way the trains fit in! Chaney depart, seven forty-five. Southwich arrive, eight thirty. You can catch that, Janie?

JANE. Yes, if I can only get out of going with Lord Bapchild.

CON. Oh, we can manage that.

GEORGE. (*To* CONSTANTIA.) Canchester depart eight fifty. Southwich arrive nine thirty. Will that suit you?

CON. Yes, very nicely. I daresay I can man-

age to leave Lord Bapchild—unless he insists on rowing me back.

JANE. Connie, you don't mean to leave Lord Bapchild?

CON. Yes, dearest, indeed I do. But even if I didn't, you could still get married without me.

JANE. No, I couldn't. I must have you with me every moment, so as to be quite sure that everything is all right, and that I'm properly married. You must see me through.

CON. Dearest, I will.

GEORGE. Very well. (*To* CONSTANTIA.) You contrive to get away from Lord Bapchild and catch the eight fifty, arriving at Southwich at nine thirty. That's quite understood, isn't it?

CON. Oh, perfectly.

JANE. And you?

GEORGE. I've got to leave everything straight at the farms. Perhaps to avoid suspicion, I had better ride over. It's only twenty miles.

JANE. And what am I to do?

GEORGE. You must wait at the station till Miss Gage or I come.

JANE. I don't like waiting about at a station.

GEORGE. Well, there's the County Hotel.

JANE. Oh, not a big hotel—they'd be sure to inquire there.

GEORGE. Well, where can we meet?

JANE. I don't know. I feel we are going to make a most horrible muddle of it.

GEORGE. I've got it! The "Magpie," at Southwich. It's a little old-fashioned inn in the High Street. As soon as I've finished at the farms, I'll ride over, order a comfortable little supper, and wait for you there. Then we'll take the mail up, and to-morrow at this time, Janie, you shall be safely my wife.

JANE. You're sure of that, Georgie? I trust you.

GEORGE. You may. Then it's quite understood. In any case we all meet at the "Magpie" at Southwich at half-past nine.

CON. The "Magpie" at Southwich at half-past nine.

JANE. The "Magpie" at Southwich at half-past nine.

(*Suddenly straightens herself, listens, then rushes to door at back. As she gets there* PAMELA *bobs up to the left in the conservatory.*)

JANE. What?

PAMELA *enters from conservatory.*

JANE. You haven't been to the village?

PAM. No, and I never meant to go! You

thought yourself very clever, didn't you, Miss Nangle, when you shook me and threatened me! You thought you had stopped me from speaking! But you haven't! I haven't told mamma at present! I've been saving it all up, so as to have a thorough good row in the house. And there's something going on this afternoon! And I'm going to follow you all up till I've found out what it is, and then, just when everybody isn't expecting it, I shall suddenly let out all that's been going on the last six months. And then, won't there be a scene! Oh, there will be such a scene!

JANE (*going to her desperately*). You fiend—

CON. Hush! Don't be foolish! Let's think what we can do with her.

(*The* THREE *draw into a conference, heads together, whispering.*)

PAM. Ha! You may whisper, but I shan't let any of you get out of my sight. You can Red Pepper poor dear mamma, but you can't Red Pepper me!

JANE. Oh, how I wish I could!

GEORGE. (*After consultation, in a quiet tone to* JANE *and* CONSTANTIA.) All right! I'll manage it. (*Aloud in a very marked tone so that* PAMELA *can hear.*) Then if you're ready, Miss Gage——

CON. Quite!

(GEORGE *is going off into conservatory followed by* CONSTANTIA. PAMELA *jumps up prepared to follow them, when their movement is arrested by the entrance, left, of* MRS. BOSTOCK, MISS BOSTOCK, LADY BAPCHILD, MRS. BEECHINOR, *and* PREBENDARY BOSTOCK. *The* BOSTOCKS *are very correct county people, dignified, starchy, clerical, inane.* PREBENDARY BOSTOCK *is about sixty; dress, features, and expression all severely clerical. He has a habit of rising on tiptoe in conversation, and an air of constantly presiding over some minor clerical function, such as saying grace.* MRS. BOSTOCK *is a severe, high-voiced, authoritative lady of fifty-five, a terrible personage in a parish.* MISS BOSTOCK *is the natural product of* PREBENDARY *and* MRS. BOSTOCK, *and has the* BOSTOCK *characteristics of severity, dryness, correctness and clerical inanity in a marked degree. Throughout the following conversation* PAMELA *stands in an eager attitude, bursting to speak.* JANE, GEORGE, *and* CONSTANTIA *watch her with great apprehension.*

She occasionally nods viciously at them, to threaten an exposure.)

MRS. BOS. (*speaking in her loud, authoritative voice*). Yes, we went to the Oratorio. We make a point of supporting Oratorios and Sacred Concerts.

MRS. B. Jane, dear, I want to present you. (*Introducing.*) Miss Nangle, Mrs. Bostock, Miss Bostock. Miss Gage, Mrs. Bostock, Miss Bostock. (*Hand-shakings and how d'ye does exchanged.*) Mr. Bostock, Miss Nangle, Miss Gage. (*Bows exchanged.*) And Pamela, dear

---

PAM. (*looking viciously at* JANE). Yes, mamma.

MRS. B. (*proudly*). This is my own little flower. My daughter Pamela, Mrs. Bostock, Miss Bostock. Mr. Bostock, my daughter. (*Bowings, hand-shakings, etc.*) Ah, Mr. Langton!

GEORGE. I thought Lord Bapchild would be glad to get the latest news of Red Pepper.

PAM. Oh!

MRS. B. What's the matter, Pamela?

PAM. Nothing, mamma, but——

MRS. B. Go and sit down, dear.

(PAMELA *stays where she is.*)

GEORGE. He is very much better.

MRS. B. So Mr. Punshon said. Thank you for coming.

PAM. (*bursting to speak*). Mamma——

MRS. B. (*severely*). Didn't you hear me, child? Go and sit down.

(PAMELA *reluctantly goes away, but keeps looking at* JANE *and* CONSTANTIA, *who are watching her and whispering.*)

PREB. (*To* LADY BAPCHILD.) You didn't come to the Oratorio?

LADY B. No, the acoustics of the Canchester Town Hall are so very bad.

PREB. They are. And I am speaking there next month.

MRS. B. Indeed!

PREB. Yes, I am giving the annual address of the Young Peoples' Happy Evening Society.

(*Turns and looks at* JANE *and* CONSTANTIA, *who are whispering, shows a little annoyance.*)

MRS. B. What is the subject?

PREB. "The Present-day English Young Lady. Her manners and habits compared with those of the past generation."

(*Turns and looks at* JANE, *who is still chattering.*)

JANE (*a little confused*). Oh, that will be interesting, won't it?

PREB. Perhaps you would like to be present?

JANE. Oh, I should!

PAM (*still bursting, looking very threateningly at* JANE). Mamma, I've got something very important to tell you——

MRS. B. (*very severely*). Not now, my dear Pamela. Go away, and don't let me have to speak to you again.

GEORGE. I must be getting back to the farms, Lady Bapchild. Will you let his lordship know that Red Pepper is out of danger?

LADY B. Oh, yes, Mr. Langton. Thank you for coming over.

GEORGE *bows to all, goes off at back through conservatory, watched and followed a few steps by* PAMELA, *who still watches* CONSTANTIA *and* JANE. CONSTANTIA, *after a moment or two, follows* GEORGE *through conservatory, and* PAMELA, *after a moment or two of indecision, goes after them through conservatory.* JANE *watches, anxious and impatient, and goes up to conservatory door.*)

MRS. BOS. I have asked Mr. Bostock to speak out very strongly upon the present liberties that are allowed to English girls of all classes. I think that if modesty and maidenly reserve are to be preserved amongst us, it is high time that somebody made a stand.

MRS. B. Ah, very true!

MISS B. The disgraceful way in which those Rawlinson girls behaved at our Bazaar! And the men seemed to be attracted by it!

MRS. BOS. Ah, that is the sad part of it. But I was glad to see, dear, that you held aloof.

MISS B. Yes. My stall was not successful—

MRS. BOS. Never mind, dear. You retained your knick-knacks, but you also retained your maidenly dignity and pride.

PREB. I was thinking, Mrs. Beechinor, that you might be able to give me a few hints for my address.

MRS. B. In what way?

PREB. You had a young ladies' school for some years. Now, what is your opinion of the rising generation of English girls?

MRS. B. I must own that the majority of girls who passed under my care were very dear, sweet girls indeed!

PREB. Were they? But wasn't there—didn't I hear some unfortunate story about a drill sergeant——

MRS. B. The professor of calisthenics. Yes —oh, yes! She was not a nice girl—quite an exception!

PREB. Ah! ah! But you would say, would you not, that there has been a very marked deterioration in the manners of English girls during the last—say—twenty years?

MRS. B. No, no! I really wouldn't.

PREB. You would scarcely say that English girls have improved, eh?

MRS. B. Yes, yes, I think so—on the whole, but perhaps I have learned how to deal with them——

PREB. Ah——

MRS. B. Now, when Mr. Nangle first put Jane under my care, she was quite a rebel, weren't you, Jane?

(*Calling up to* JANE, *who has been watching and fuming at back, and occasionally making faces behind the* PREBENDARY'S *back.*)

JANE. Was I? I'm so sorry.

MRS. B. Say no more. I'm sure you realize how necessary it is that young girls should be constantly watched and guided——

JANE. Oh, yes; oh, yes!

MRS. B. You see how wise and salutary are all the rules and restrictions that the wisdom of past

generations has devised for your protection, don't you?

JANE. Oh, yes; oh, yes!

MRS. B. (*Very gratified, turns to* PREBENDARY, *who sheds approval on* JANE.) Dear girl! I feel very, very proud of the influence I have gained over you.

(*Dinner gong sounds. General movement. It begins to grow dusk from this point.*)

MRS. B. Ah, there is the first gong!

LADY B. (*rising*). You have been to your rooms, haven't you? Bapchild is going to row Miss Nangle over to Canchester to meet her father. So he asks you to excuse him from dinner.

PREB. Oh, certainly!

(LADY BAPCHILD *talks to* MRS. BOSTOCK *and* MISS BOSTOCK *and takes them off, left.*)

PREB. (*To* MRS. BEECHINOR.) And you really think that in giving my address I shall be warranted in taking the ground that English girlhood is improving?

MRS. B. Oh, yes,—improving—certainly improving.

PREB. I'm rejoiced to hear it!

(*Exeunt* PREBENDARY *and* MRS. BEECHINOR, *left.* JANE, *left alone, goes to bell, rings it.* CONSTANTIA *enters through conservatory.*)

JANE. Well? Did you manage it?

CON. Yes. The little beast jumped into the boat after us, and then while Georgie fussed about, I jumped back on shore, and he rowed off with her.

JANE. What will he do with her?

CON. I don't know. She screamed like a fury. He'll find some way of getting rid of her so that she doesn't interfere with us.

JANE. He is sure to come?

CON. Oh, yes; he called out as he went off, "Don't forget the 'Magpie!'"

Enter FOOTMAN, *right.*

JANE. Will you please send Trendell to me?

(*Exit* FOOTMAN, *right.*)

JANE. Connie, I've just thought—if I'm supposed to have gone with Lord Bapchild, where are you supposed to be?

CON. I don't know. Where am I?

JANE. You must be ill and Trendell shall be looking after you, eh?

CON. Yes, that will do.

Enter TRENDELL, *right.*

JANE. Oh, Trendell—we are going to trust you. We can trust you?

TREN. Oh, Miss, need you ask?

JANE. When everybody is in the drawing-room just before dinner, will you come in and say that Miss Gage has a very bad headache, and asks Lady Bapchild to excuse her from dinner. She wishes to be left entirely alone.

TREN. Yes, Miss.

JANE. And, Trendell, will you bring my new traveling cloak and hat to me here at once?

TREN. Yes, Miss. (*Exit, right.*)

JANE. Oh, Connie, darling, I'm in such a fever. (*Clinging to* CONSTANTIA.) Shall we manage to bring it off, do you think?

CON. Yes, if we keep cool.

Enter LORD BAPCHILD, *left, in serge sailor's suit and hat and reefer overcoat.*)

LORD B. Ah, here you are. We have only just time.

JANE. Lord Bapchild, I've such a strange sick feeling, I cannot stand the motion of the boat——

LORD B. Then we can't go?

JANE. I have a very important message to send to my father. I've given it to Connie——

LORD B. Oh! !

JANE. Would you mind rowing her over?

LORD B. Well——

CON. I'm so sorry to trouble you, Lord Bapchild, but the message is so important. Of course, if you'd rather not take me——

LORD B. Oh, no—oh, no—on the contrary—delighted! But—hadn't we better explain——

JANE. Oh, no. I'll explain to everybody.

LORD B. Then—if you're ready, Miss Gage—

CON. Shall we go through the conservatory?

LORD B. Yes—yes—I'm really delighted. And it's a lovely night. But oughtn't we to explain——I'm sure we ought to explain——

(CONSTANTIA *hurries him off.* LORD BAPCHILD *and* CONSTANTIA *go off through conservatory,* CONSTANTIA *throwing back a grateful look at* JANE *as she goes off.* JANE *goes up to back and watches them off. Enter* TRENDELL, *right, with* JANE'S *hat and cloak.* JANE *comes down,* TRENDELL *helps her on with cloak and hat.*)

JANE. Trendell, if anyone asks you any questions to-night, you don't know anything about anybody.

TREN. No, Miss.

JANE. And, Trendell—I shan't forget you.

TREN. Oh, Miss, you're too kind. How you are trembling, Miss!

JANE. No, I'm not. Go into the conservatory and look round and see if anybody is there or outside.

(TRENDELL *goes into conservatory, looks round and off at door.* JANE *goes first to door right, and looks off cautiously; then to door left, and looks off cautiously; then goes into conservatory and meets* TRENDELL.)

TREN. It's all quite clear, Miss.

(JANE *goes into conservatory. Enter* FOOTMAN, *right.* JANE *puts her finger on lip to* TRENDELL *and exit stealthily through outer conservatory.* TRENDELL *comes out of conservatory into drawing-room.*)

FOOT. What's his lordship gone off rowing just at dinner-time for?

TREN. I don't know.

FOOT. One of the young ladies has gone with him, ain't she?

TREN. Has she?

FOOT. Anything special going on to-night?

TREN. Not that I know of. (*Exit right.*)

(FOOTMAN *turns up electric light, lights the fire, tidies the room, takes up the "Bradshaw," etc., shuts windows of conservatory, etc.*)

PREBENDARY BOSTOCK *enters left, goes to fire and stands with his back to it.* JERVIS *enters through conservatory with hat and overcoat over evening dress.*

JERVIS. Ah, my dear Bostock, delighted to see you. (*Shakes hands.* FOOTMAN *comes and takes* JERVIS'S *hat and coat.*) I've promised Bapchild to take his place at dinner to-night.

PREB. So we understood.

Enter MRS. BOSTOCK *and* MISS BOSTOCK, *left, in dinner dress.*

JERVIS. William, his lordship is rowing over to Canchester, isn't he?

FOOT. Yes, sir. His lordship has just put off in the boat with one of the young ladies.

JERVIS. Miss Nangle?

FOOT. Yes, sir.

(*Exit right, with* JERVIS'S *hat and coat.*)

JERVIS. How d'ye do? (*Shakes hands. To* MISS BOSTOCK.) How d'ye do? (*Shakes hands.*) Miss Nangle's father is arriving to-night, and nothing would do for Bapchild but he

must row Miss Nangle over to meet him and give Nangle a surprise, and a little dinner at the "Bull."

MRS. BOS. Isn't it rather dangerous?

JERVIS. You mean the tides. Oh, not at all! Bapchild is an expert oarsman, and knows the currents thoroughly. And he was naturally anxious to show Nangle a little attention on his arrival, under the circumstances.

MRS. BOS. Then, are we to congratulate Lord Bapchild and Miss Nangle?

JERVIS. Well, that would be a little premature, but I fancy it won't be long before we ask you to do so.

Enter LADY BAPCHILD, *left.*

LADY B. Jervis, Mr. Nangle has just sent another telegram to say that he is kept in London on business, and will come by the early morning train.

JERVIS. Oh! Oh!

LADY B. Bapchild has rowed Miss Nangle across to meet him, hasn't he?

JERVIS. Yes, yes. Well, they'll find Nangle hasn't come, and then if Bapchild is wise, he'll ask Miss Nangle to dine with him.

MRS. BOS. Alone?

JERVIS. What else can he do? And then row her back in the moonlight.

(MRS. BOSTOCK *looks severe and shakes her head disapprovingly.*)

Enter TRENDELL, *right.*

TREN. If you please, my lady, Miss Gage has a very bad headache, and will you kindly excuse her from coming to dinner to-night?

LADY B. Very well, Trendell.

(*Exit* TRENDELL, *right.*)

LADY B. Jervis, don't you think we ought to send somebody across to Canchester to fetch Miss Nangle back?

JERVIS. Oh, no, my dear Catherine. It's perhaps a little awkward—eh, Mrs. Bostock?

MRS. BOS. Well, according to my old-fashioned notions; but then, you see, I am old-fashioned. It is certainly most unfortunate.

JERVIS. My dear Mrs. Bostock, here are two young people who are virtually engaged. Through no fault of their own they find themselves alone—and hungry. Now, really, we are not so prudish as to condemn them for dining. Suppose the same thing had happened, for instance, to yourself and Bostock——

MRS. BOS. Oh, that would have been impossible.

JERVIS. My dear Mrs. Bostock, the strictest and best of us may find ourselves in awkward situations sometimes!

Enter MRS. BEECHINOR *in evening dress, and with a very tragic face.*

JERVIS. What's the matter?

MRS. B. (*breathless*). An accident! Biggs, the gardener from the farm, was rowing across—saw Bapchild in the distance—his oar was broken, and as he was taking the other oar from Miss Nangle, it somehow fell into the river—they got into the current, and they're carried away to sea together!

(*General consternation.* LADY BAPCHILD *shows great alarm.* JERVIS *stands perplexed and overwhelmed. The dinner gong sounds bang, bang, bang, bang, bang! They all look at each other.*)

SLOW CURTAIN.

(*Three hours pass between Acts II. and III.*)

ACT III

SCENE I—THE "MAGPIE" AT SOUTHWICH. A private room in an old-fashioned inn. Door right. Fireplace at back with old-fashioned ornaments and copper vessels. A sideboard with glass, and a cupboard with glass front showing some pieces of old silver. Coaching and sporting prints on the wall. Night, about 11 o'clock. As curtain goes up a very rowdy chorus is heard in an adjoining room, accompanied by a piano very much out of tune, clinking of glasses, laughter and shouting.

Discover JANE *pacing backwards and forwards in a fury.*

JANE (*raging*). Oh, Georgie, oh, Connie, when I do see you, you shall give me some very good reason for leaving me in the lurch like this!

(*Takes out watch.*)

(*Riotous laughter and shouting in the next room as chorus finishes.* JANE *goes to door, opens it cautiously, peeps out, noise and laughter increase, and a*

general yell is heard as some young men outside catch sight of her, and make a general stampede towards the door, which she bangs hastily in their faces and locks. Young men's voices outside, accompanied by knocking at door and laughter. Won't you let us in, Miss? Oh, do let us have a look at your pretty face, ducky! Don't be afraid, my darling! They shan't hurt you! No, we won't hurt you, lamby! etc., etc. JANE *goes to table, takes up bell and rings it furiously.*)

PAWSEY'S VOICE OUTSIDE. Get away, you chaps! Clear out! d'ye hear? and leave the young lady alone. (*The door is tried from the outside.*) Open the door, miss.

JANE. Is that you, landlord?

PAWSEY (*outside*). Yes, miss.

JANE. Send those men away.

PAWSEY. They're going, miss. Open the door. (JANE *opens the door.*)

PAWSEY *enters, a slow, podgy, liquor-seasoned, good-humoured country innkeeper.*

PAWSEY (*speaking off.*) Now get out, and no more larking to-night.

(*A rude, derisive shout outside.*)

PAWSEY (*very severely*). Charley Higgins, will you break your record, and behave yourself for once in your life? It ain't much to ask of an old friend!

(*Closes the door and comes in. Noise outside subsides, and a song begins in adjoining room, but much more subdued than the first chorus, as if the door were closed.*)

JANE (*still raging*). How dare they?

PAWSEY. How dare they what?

JANE. They insulted me, and I——

PAWSEY. Oh, no, miss. Charley Higgins put his arm round your waist, but he didn't insult you. I don't allow anybody to be insulted on my premises, not even my barmaid.

JANE. But I consider it disgraceful.

PAWSEY. Hold hard, miss. It's larkish, I allow, to have a young man's arm round your waist, but there's nothing disgraceful about it. And if young ladies don't want to meet with larkish young men, they don't ought to visit public-houses at eleven o'clock at night!

JANE. My friends arranged to meet me here.

PAWSEY. What sort of friends are they? Lady friends or gentlemen friends?

JANE. A lady, and a gentleman.

PAWSEY. One of each sort. Well, it's closing time, and either you must take yourself off——

JANE. Take myself off—where?

PAWSEY. Well, miss, that's for you to choose. Or you must engage a room and go to bed in the ordinary way——

JANE. Go to bed in this place? Impossible!

PAWSEY. Not at all. Me and my family have done it regularly every night for twenty years.

JANE. I tell you, my friends may be here at any moment.

PAWSEY. Who are they? And, no offence, miss, who are you, and how do you come to be gallivanting about the country at large without anybody to take care of you? Because to my mind it looks fishy!

JANE. I'm waiting for my friends, and I must and will stay here till they come!

PAWSEY (*taking out watch*). You can stay here just five minutes longer, miss, and then either you must go, or you must engage a room for the night, and give me your name like a respectable young lady. Five minutes more, miss!

(*Exit.*)

JANE (*in a greater fury than before*). Oh, if I once get safely out of this, I'll take good care how and where I promise to meet my Georgie the next time! What shall I do? What shall I do?

GEORGE *enters quickly at door and shuts it behind him. She turns round fiercely on him.*

JANE. Ha! So you've come at last!

(GEORGE *comes up to her. She pushes him away with her hands. Singing and noise in the adjoining room gradually quiet down and cease.*)

GEORGE. What's the matter?

JANE. Why did you send me to a place like this? Why did you allow me to come here alone?

GEORGE. Where is Miss Gage?

JANE. Attending to her own affairs. I knew she would never leave Lord Bapchild, the selfish, sly, contriving wretch! Why didn't you keep your word? Why did you leave me here to be insulted?

GEORGE. Who has insulted you?

JANE. Everybody! I was stared at and spoken to at the station. When I could bear it no longer I came on here and asked for a private room. Those common fellows of the town came in, and one of them put his arm round me and wanted to kiss me.

GEORGE. I'm sorry, but——

JANE. Sorry! Where have you been all the evening?

GEORGE. Looking after that little she-cat, Pamela Beechinor. I've only just managed to get rid of her. I've had no chance of getting any dinner!

JANE. Neither have I. You should have left

her and come to me! You promised to be here! I trusted myself to you, and you said I should never repent! Well, I do repent! I do repent! and I'll never trust myself to you again!

GEORGE (*getting a little nettled*). You'll trust yourself to me to take you up to London and marry you, I suppose?

JANE. No! I won't!

GEORGE. Then I suppose you'll trust yourself to me to take you safely back to Chaney Court and leave you there?

JANE. Take me safely back at this time?! What would everybody say? What would everybody think?

GEORGE. You won't come up to town! You won't go back to Chaney Court! Will you please tell me what I am to do with you?

JANE. I don't know! You got me into this shameful mess, and you must get me out of it!

GEORGE. I don't see that you're in any shameful mess. You came here with a promise to marry me. I'm ready to keep that promise—at least I was when I came into this room——

JANE. But now you don't want to?

GEORGE. My dear girl, you say you won't marry me——

JANE. Don't call me your dear girl! And I didn't say I wouldn't marry you. I say this and I mean it—I won't be married in a horrid shabby

way at a frowsty registry office! When I'm married I'll be married properly at a church, with bridesmaids, and orange-blossoms, and the wedding march, and everything as it should be!

GEORGE. I don't care how we're married, or whether——

JANE. Or whether we're married at all?

GEORGE. My dear girl——

JANE (*furious*). Ha! My dear girl! Georgie, take care! If once I say I won't marry you, I won't and I *won't* and I WON'T! So don't drive me—to——

GEORGE. Drive you? You'll have to be thoroughly broken in before anybody will drive you!

JANE (*at a climax of fury*). Oh! Oh! Oh! Now you've done it! I'll never forgive you—and—(*choking with rage*)—I'll never marry you! Never! Never! Never! No—oh, I must say something—No, I'm DASHED if I do!

(*A very long pause.*)

GEORGE. You mean that?

JANE. Yes.

GEORGE (*in a very calm voice*). Very well. Now we know where we are. Our engagement is broken off. I'm very sorry that I have placed you in this false position. You will let me do all I can to repair my mistake, and to put you in the charge of someone——

JANE. Charge of someone?

GEORGE. I must get some chaperon for you—

JANE. Chaperon?

GEORGE. I can't leave you here alone, can I?

JANE (*after a little pause*). What have you done with Pamela?

GEORGE. I dodged her about the farms and missed the train. That was what made me late in coming. She knew I was going to meet you or Miss Gage, so she stuck to me, and I had to bring her on here. When I got here I took her to the County Hotel, and it seems that the proprietor, Jobson, is an old butler of the Bapchild family. Mrs. Jobson took care of her, and is going to take her back to the Court the first thing in the morning. I left her in front of a cold sirloin and a bottle of pickled walnuts, telling Jobson the most awful stories about me.

JANE. Couldn't you take me on there?

GEORGE. The little cat has given Jobson the impression that I'm one of the worst of characters. Jobson as good as ordered me off the premises.

JANE. But what can I do?

GEORGE. I'll try and get some horses and drive you back—if you'll trust yourself to me.

JANE. We shouldn't get there till four in the morning. Oh, that wretch Connie!

Enter PAWSEY.

PAWSEY. Now, if you please. It's closing time.

GEORGE. Mr. Pawsey, this young lady, Miss Nangle, had arranged to meet her friend, Miss Gage, here. But Miss Gage has not been able to come. Would Mrs. Pawsey kindly take charge of Miss Nangle until to-morrow morning, and I'll come and take her back to Chaney Court?

PAWSEY. Chaney Court?

GEORGE. Miss Nangle is a guest of Lord Bapchild's.

PAWSEY (*evidently impressed*). Lord Bapchild's? Oh! I dare say the missus wouldn't mind. I'll ask her. And what are you going to do?

GEORGE. Oh, I'll get a shakedown somewhere. Anything will do for me. (*Exit* PAWSEY.)

JANE. That's the best of being a young man! You don't want any chaperon.

GEORGE. It is an advantage. (*Takes out watch.*) Quarter past eleven! We'd better get to Chaney as early as possible to-morrow. If Miss Pamela arrives first and tells them the same pretty stories she is telling to Jobson, we shall find ourselves without a rag of character when we do get there.

JANE. I don't care. You quite understand our engagement is broken off?

GEORGE. Quite.

JANE. I mean it.

GEORGE. Of course you do. The first train starts for Chaney at a quarter past seven in the morning.

JANE. The earlier the better. I shan't get a wink of sleep.

GEORGE. I'll call for you at seven.

JANE. And when we get to Chaney Court, what then?

GEORGE. I'll tell your father exactly what has happened, make it perfectly clear that this has only been a little trifling accident, and then, as our engagement is quite broken off, I'll say "Good-bye," and leave for California!

JANE. California! Oh, you are horrid!

(*Bursts into tears.*)

Enter MRS. PAWSEY, *a stout, comfortable, motherly, good-humoured looking woman, about fifty-five.*

MRS. P. Oh, here you are, my dear! Now, what's the matter, eh?

GEORGE. This young lady has been accidentally detained and can't get home to-night. Will she be quite safe with you until the morning?

MRS. P. Lor bless you, yes, sir! As safe as if she was along of her own mother. Come, cheer up, my dear! Why, I know what gals are! I've

got two of my own, bless their hearts! (JANE *is sobbing.*) Come, there's nothing to cry for! There! There!

PAWSEY'S VOICE OUTSIDE. Now, sir, if you're ready——

GEORGE. In one moment. (*To* JANE.) Good night! (*She does not reply.*) Good night! (*She does not reply.*) Good night!

(*Exit.* JANE *is sobbing.* MRS. PAWSEY *is comforting her. Curtain.*)

SCENE 2—MISS DODD'S PARLOUR AT PILSTOW-ON-SEA. A neat little apartment such as would be used as the sitting-room of a village school-mistress. Window at back, with curtains and flower-pots. Door down stage, right. Above it, against the wall, an old-fashioned, very high piano. Fireplace down stage, left, with fire burning and kettle on the hob. A looking-glass over the fireplace. A small table with writing materials above door, towards right of stage. Miss Dodd's outdoor garments are hanging on the wall, left. A lot of little cheap ornaments about the room, a village almanack on the wall, etc. Everything very neat and tidy.

TIME—Seven on an April morning.

Discover MISS DODD, *a very prim maiden lady of forty to forty-five, seated at breakfast. A knock at the door.* MISS DODD *is startled in*

the act of eating, stops, listens. The knock is repeated, and MISS DODD *rises, goes to door. The knock is again repeated.*

MISS DODD (*going to door, opening it a few inches*). Who is there, may I ask?

LORD B.'S VOICE OUTSIDE. We have met with a boating accident, and have been out all night. Would you please allow us to come in for a few moments and warm ourselves?

MISS D. (*opening door a little further*). I really don't know what to say.

(*Stands with the door a few inches open.*)

LORD B. (*standing outside the door with* CONSTANTIA *on his arm*). We should be so much obliged if you would.

(MISS DODD *opens the door.*)

LORD BAPCHILD *enters with* CONSTANTIA *clinging to his arm. His serge suit is buttoned tightly round his neck, and has been drenched with sea water. He has lost his straw hat. He looks very pinched and wretched, and his teeth are chattering.* CONSTANTIA'S *hat is battered and shapeless; her hair has come down; her right-hand glove is gone, and the left hand is split and soaked; altogether she has an odd, disreputable appearance. Her face wears an expression of pained, helpless resignation. Her*

clothes have also been drenched. She clings tightly to LORD BAPCHILD, *and is inclined to lean on him, which he resents at times, looking a little annoyed in the midst of his misery.*

MISS D. Where have you come from?

LORD B. We started last night for a pleasant little row to Canchester, and we were rowing one oar each. In midstream my oar unfortunately broke, and then as I was taking the other——

(*Glancing at* CONSTANTIA.)

CON. You let it fall into the river.

LORD B. No, really, it was you who let it fall.

CON. Indeed, indeed, no!

LORD B. It is not a matter of great importance. The oar did fall. We were then taken out to sea. We have been drifting all the night, and this morning we were carried on to the beach below; and now—we do not know precisely where we are. Where are we?

MISS D. This is the village of Pilstow, and I am Miss Dodd, the schoolmistress.

LORD B. As we came up from the beach yours was the first cottage, and—(*his teeth chattering*)—we saw you had a fire, and if you don't mind—(*To* CONSTANTIA.) It might, perhaps, be as well not to cling quite so closely to me. We are not in any danger now! (CONSTANTIA *still clings.*)

MISS D. I should be very pleased to make you

welcome, but my servant has gone for her holidays, and I'm quite alone. And it behoves a single lady to be so particular. (*Looking at* CONSTANTIA'S *hair.*) I should like to run across and consult Mr. Tompkinson, our clergyman—he's such a nice man.

LORD B. No, it won't be necessary to consult the clergyman, will it, eh?

CON. (*staring hopelessly in front of her*). I do not know. I do not know.

MISS D. You see, we have lately had such a dreadful scandal in the parish—of course you're married?

LORD B. (*startled*) No! No! (*Drops* CONSTANTIA'S *arm.*) What led you to think——

MISS D. Well, naturally I thought from seeing you in such circumstances that you were married—or at least engaged.

CON. (*gives a despairing groan, and drops on the sofa, hiding her face in her hands*). My poor mother!

MISS D. (*getting flurried*). I hope she isn't going to be ill!

LORD B. No. It's only sea-sickness. We have both been very much upset during the night. Is there a comfortable hotel near?

MISS D. There's "The Sailor's Joy," a mile away, but it's only a low public-house.

LORD B. What can we do? I assure you it's all right! quite all right!

CON. (*on sofa*). My poor mother!

MISS D. (*very flurried and suspicious*). I really must consult Mr. Tompkinson.

(*She goes to wall, and puts on her hat and cloak.*)

CON. (*aside to* LORD BAPCHILD). Just to save appearances, tell her we're engaged!

(LORD BAPCHILD *shows surprise and a little alarm.*)

CON. (*imploringly*). For my sake, tell her we're engaged.

LORD B. (*To* MISS DODD.) I assure you it's all right, perfectly all right. We're not married, but—we are engaged! Yes!

MISS D. That makes a difference. You don't wish to stay very long, I suppose?

LORD B. Oh, no; we wish to take the next train back. How far is the nearest station?

MISS D. Just over a mile.

CON. (*despairingly*). Is there a telegraph office near?

MISS D. Yes, just up the street; but it doesn't open till eight.

CON. (*helpless despair*). Very well Very well.

MISS D. (*still suspicious*). I'm sure I ought to ask Mr. Tompkinson's advice. (*Putting on hat*

and cloak.) If you've been out all night, I dare say you're hungry. You're quite welcome to what's on the table. I won't be gone long. You'll excuse me; but a single lady has to be so careful, and we have had such a scandal in the parish. (*Exit at door.*)

LORD B. (*looking at* CONSTANTIA). This is really very unfortunate——

CON. (*Groans.*) My poor mother!

LORD B. What of her?

CON. Don't you see? Don't you realize?

LORD B. No! How? We have met with an unfortunate accident, nothing more. Neither of us is to blame. Under the circumstances, I think we have both behaved admirably, eh?

CON. My poor mother!

LORD B. Really, I don't see any especial cause to pity Mrs. Gage. (CONSTANTIA *is looking at him intently, with great reproach.*) I wish you wouldn't look at me in that reproachful way, as if I had done you some dreadful injury.

CON. (*very solemnly*). Lord Bapchild, my reputation is hopelessly compromised. You are an honourable man. I place myself entirely in your hands.

LORD B. You know you're taking this far too seriously.

CON. Too seriously?!!

LORD B. Yes. The best thing we can do is to

make light of it; treat it somewhat in the nature of a joke—eh?

CON. Joke!

(*She looks at him very reproachfully.*)

LORD B. Laugh it off! Eh? Eh? (*Nervously.*) She said we might help ourselves to breakfast. Yes. (*Peering amongst the breakfast things.*) There is apparently a bloater and some potted ham. Now, come! Let us forget all about our troubles, and enjoy ourselves. Eh? Eh?

CON. How can you ask me? But you are hungry. Very well. Sit down and eat, and leave me face to face with my future.

(*Staring tragically in front of her.*)

LORD B. (*Sits down.*) I don't think I will eat anything just at present. That constant tossing—(*Turning away from table.*) No!

CON. (*Comes tragically to him.*) Lord Bapchild, I do not care for myself. But I have a mother. I cannot break her heart. You would not wish me?

LORD B. Certainly not. But what can I do?

CON. Do what is best for yourself. I place myself in your hands implicitly.

(*Is about to cling to him again; he avoids her.*)

LORD B. Really, I don't see precisely what I can do. (*Getting away from her.*)

CON. (*going towards looking-glass, catches sight of herself in the glass*). Oh! Oh!

LORD B. What's the matter?

CON. Have I been going about with you in this disgraceful state? Oh! Would you mind seeing if there are any hairpins lying about? (*In front of glass, doing up her hair.*) Do look and see!

LORD B. (*Looks about on table, on window ledge, opens table drawers, etc.* CONSTANTIA *is doing her hair up in front of glass.*) I don't see any.

CON. Oh, do look! Ah! (*Seeing hairpins on the shelf.*) Here are some! Would you mind?

LORD B. What?

CON. My fingers are so numbed with the cold that I really can't hold the hairpin. Would you kindly—try and fasten up this knot of hair?

LORD B. I'm not accustomed to——

CON. Try.

LORD B. Well, under these peculiar circumstances——

CON. Yes, under these peculiar circumstances —Please fasten it there.

LORD B. Where?

CON. (*her hand guiding his*). There. I think that will do. Thank you, so much.

(*Holding his hand.*)

LORD B. Do you know you have rather beautiful hair——

CON. Ah! Don't say that—under these peculiar circumstances. In a happier time, how pleased I should be to hear you praise my hair. But not now! Not now!

LORD B. Why not now? Miss Gage—I-a—I-a——

CON. Oh, Lord Bapchild! you could make me the proudest and happiest woman in the world.

LORD B. Could I? Miss Gage, I—how could I make you happy? (*Trying to embrace her.*)

CON. No! No! (*Throwing herself into his arms.*) Let me go away and hide myself somewhere! Don't think of me.

(*Clinging to him.*)

LORD B. But I must think of you. And—Miss Gage—Connie—(*with a sudden, desperate plunge*)—will you be my wife?

CON. Need you ask it? Yes! Yes! Yes!

(*Throws herself into his arms.*)

(LORD BAPCHILD *kisses her very warmly, then much less warmly, and finally releases her, gets away from her, stands apart, stricken with shame, repentance and apprehension.*)

CURTAIN.

(*An hour passes between Acts III. and IV.*)

ACT IV

SCENE—THE DRAWING-ROOM AT CHANEY COURT, as in Act II. Morning, about half-past eight.

Discover FOOTMAN *showing in* GEORGE, *right.*

GEORGE. His lordship is carried out to sea with Miss Nangle, you say?

FOOTMAN. Yes, sir. And in the middle of the rumpus about his lordship and Miss Nangle, Mrs. Beechinor discovered that Miss Beechinor was missing.

GEORGE. What can have become of Miss Beechinor?

FOOTMAN. Nobody knows, sir. But what with her ladyship shrieking Philibert, and then going off into a comatose condition for his lordship, and Mrs. Beechinor marching about the park half the night with a lantern——

GEORGE. What for?

FOOTMAN. To find Miss Pamela. And when

she was tired, she put all of us servants on to the job. We have had a very lively night of it altogether.

GEORGE. Can I leave a note for Mrs. Beechinor?

FOOTMAN. You'll find pens and paper on that table, sir. (GEORGE *seats himself; writes.*)

GEORGE (*writing*). And what did Mr. Nangle say?

FOOTMAN. Mr. Nangle, sir?

GEORGE. Didn't Mr. Nangle come last night?

FOOTMAN. No, sir; he telegraphed to say he couldn't get here till the first train this morning.

GEORGE (*writing*). Oh, very well, William.

(GEORGE *watches* FOOTMAN *off, addresses his letter, leaves it on table; goes off into conservatory, to outer door, admits* JANE, *who enters in the dress of the night before.*)

GEORGE. Connie has been carried out to sea with Lord Bapchild.

JANE. I don't care what has happened to Connie.

GEORGE. But if you could get up to your room by the servants' staircase it might never be known that you have been out all night.

JANE. I don't care whether it's known that I've been out all night. (*Seats herself defiantly.*)

GEORGE. At least you will own that I have done everything to shield you from the consequences of my imprudence. Good-bye.

(*Going off at back.*)

JANE. I do call you a coward!

GEORGE (*coming back*). Coward!

JANE. You've got me into this horrible mess, and now you daren't stay by me and see me out of it!

GEORGE. I daren't?

JANE. No, you daren't. Or else why are you sneaking off like that? Why don't you say "I have wronged you very, very deeply, and I cannot hope that you will ever forgive me. But it is my duty to stay by your side. I will do my duty. I will never desert you. I will defend you against all the world." That's what you'd say if you were a *man!*

GEORGE (*seating himself comfortably*). Oh, very well; if you don't mind being compromised—

JANE. But you have compromised me! And —(*bursting out*)—now you're trying to back out of it! You daren't stay and face the consequences!

GEORGE. Tell me what you want me to do.

JANE. If you really cared for me, you'd be very penitent, and ask me to marry you, in spite of your shameful treatment of me.

GEORGE. But you said you'd be "dashed" if you would.

JANE. Well, I wouldn't mind being "dashed" —if—if you would only own you were in the wrong.

GEORGE. Janie, I have loved you very deeply—

JANE. I don't believe it. It's been all on my side!

GEORGE. I have loved you—I do love you.

JANE. You love me now?

GEORGE. You know I do with all my heart.

JANE. Then why don't you beg my pardon—oh, I do hate you, Georgie!

GEORGE. No, you don't! You love me! And we'll both forget what is past and make a fresh start. Go up to your room now, and don't let anybody see you. Your father hasn't arrived yet. He's coming this morning. I'll see him, and tell him everything that has happened. If he'll give you to me, well and good. If not, I'll marry you in spite of him, in spite of everybody, in spite of yourself, you vixen! Now, will you have me on those terms?

JANE. You know I'll have you on any terms, you wretch! (*He kisses her.*)

GEORGE. Now go to your room quickly. I've got to leave everything straight at the farms. I'll be back by-and-bye to see your father.

(*Taking her up into conservatory.*)

JANE (*at conservatory door*). Aren't you going to ask me to forgive you?

GEORGE. No, I'm dashed if I do!

JANE. Then I'll forgive you without! You have behaved shamefully, abominably! But I forgive you—(*shaking him as she had shaken* PAMELA *in Act I.*)—I forgive you!

GEORGE. Hush!

(*They pass into conservatory, and off right.*)

LADY BAPCHILD, MRS. BEECHINOR, *and* JERVIS *enter, left.* LADY BAPCHILD *and* MRS. BEECHINOR *are both tearful and woebegone.*

JERVIS (*speaking as he enters*). Nothing fresh?

LADY B. (*sobbing*). No. I told you, Jervis, if you disarranged Bapchild's mind, something dreadful would happen. (*Sits, and has a sudden access of grief.*) And only the night before last he argued so beautifully about marriage! And now he's drowned!

JERVIS. Don't make too sure of it. We shall get some news of him before long.

MRS. B. (*also tearful*). Yes, Catherine, you are wrong to despair about Bapchild. Even if it comes to the worst, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that he is actually drowned. But the

awful thing about my poor darling is her sudden, mysterious disappearance without a word, without a sign! Suppose the years go by and Pamela never returns!

JERVIS. Well, then we shall have to make up our minds to do without her, poor darling! (*Has gone up to table.*) Hillo! Agatha, here's a letter for you. (*Giving it to her.*) Langton's handwriting.

MRS. B. (*Takes letter, opens it very eagerly, shows great relief.*) Ah! My poor darling is safe! Listen. "By a curious misadventure Miss Beechinor was taken to Southwich last night. She is quite safe and well in the care of Mrs. Jobson at the County Hotel. Mrs. Jobson will bring her back this morning——"

(*Sits down and cries a little.*)

JERVIS. Oh! That's one of our poor darlings quite safe.

Enter FOOTMAN, *right, with telegram on tray.*

FOOTMAN. Telegram for her ladyship.

LADY B. Open it, Jervis. I'm sure it's bad news.

JERVIS. (*Takes telegram from* FOOTMAN.) Wait a moment, William. (*Opens telegram.*)

LADY B. Break it to me very gently.

JERVIS (*reading*). "We have landed safely at

Pilstow. Returning to Chaney by first train. Bapchild." (LADY BAPCHILD *cries.*)

JERVIS. That's the other of our poor darlings quite safe. (*Exit* FOOTMAN, *right.*)

JERVIS. Agatha, what's the matter?

MRS. B. My Pamela! (*Crying with relief.*)

JERVIS. Oh, cheer up! She'll give you a lot more trouble before you've done with her. Catherine, cheer up! Now, listen to me! We must play this midnight adventure of Bapchild's for all it's worth!

MRS. B. What do you mean?

JERVIS. If anybody but Bapchild had been fifteen hours at sea with a pretty girl, we might reasonably expect that he'd have proposed to her. But with Bapchild, heaven only knows what may have happened. If he has proposed to her, all right. If he hasn't, we must drive him into a corner and shame him into it.

Enter FOOTMAN *right, announcing* MR. NANGLE.
Enter NANGLE. *Exit* FOOTMAN.

NANGLE (*very cordially*). Ah, my dear Lady Bapchild!

LADY B. How d'ye do?
(*Shaking hands with* NANGLE.)

NANGLE (*passing to* MRS. BEECHINOR). How d'ye do?

MRS. B. My dear Mr. Nangle!

(*Cordial hand-shaking.*)

NANGLE. Punshon! (*Coming to* JERVIS, *another cordial hand-shaking.*) I couldn't get down last night, but——

JERVIS. My dear fellow, you have come at the very luckiest moment—have you heard the news?

NANGLE. The man who drove me up from the station told me that Lord Bapchild and Jane had been carried away to sea together, but the footman says you've had news of their landing.

(JANE *appears at the window in conservatory as if she were coming into the drawing-room, but stops on seeing her father, listens to the following scene, her face showing interest, surprise, bewilderment, and utter inability to cope with the situation.*)

JERVIS (*giving telegram*). Read that! (NANGLE *reads telegram.*) When Bapchild heard that you were coming he insisted on rowing Miss Nangle over to Canchester to meet you, and—I had it from his own lips—he meant to propose to her on the way across, and to greet you with the news on your arrival.

NANGLE (*returning telegram*). Excellent! Excellent! Then they really are engaged?

MRS. B. Dear Jane tells me that she likes him very much——

JERVIS. And I'm quite sure that Bapchild on his side means business. I've never seen him more determined than he was when he set out last evening.

NANGLE. Excellent! Excellent!

JERVIS. Yes; all that remains for you to do is to shed your fatherly benediction and let them fix the marriage as soon as possible.

NANGLE. Excellent! Excellent! Now tell me, Mrs. Beechinor, what has been my daughter's behaviour during my absence?

MRS. B. (*enthusiastically*). Everything that I could wish! She is a very dear, sweet girl! A really nice girl!

NANGLE. Is she?

JERVIS. Nangle, you have sadly misjudged that girl!

NANGLE. Well, perhaps I have.

JERVIS. Of course there's a great art in managing young ladies. And when you know all the particulars I'm sure you will own with me that Mrs. Beechinor has directed this affair with all that infinite patience, that infinite knowledge of girls and their little ways, and that infinite tact in guiding their youthful emotions into the right channel, which are the indispensable requisites of a good chaperon.

MRS. B. Jervis, you are too flattering.

JERVIS. No. I must give you the credit that is due to you.

NANGLE. You are not giving your sister half the credit that is due to her. (*Getting maudlin rhetorical.*) Mrs. Beechinor, if you know what a father's feelings are——

(*Offering his hand.*)

MRS. B. (*responding very warmly*). I can guess. I am a mother, and I have a treasure of my own.

NANGLE (*getting more maudlin, and more rhetorical*). I cannot express my gratitude. But though my words are poor enough, you may be sure that I shall find a far more substantial way of showing you how much——

MRS. B. No, no—— (*Protesting.*)

NANGLE. Yes. Yes. I will say no more upon this matter until my daughter is safely married to Lord Bapchild. (JANE *throws up her arms with a gesture of comic bewildered despair and exit into conservatory.*) Upon that happy day I shall insist upon showing you how much I value this really great achievement of yours.

MRS. B. (*also maudlin, also rhetorical*). I assure you that dear Jane has already sufficiently repaid me by her constant obedience and her attention to those necessary rules of conduct which I have endeavored to instill into her youthful mind.

And if I can only see her brought safely into the haven of marriage with my dear nephew Bapchild I shall feel that I have done my duty, and made this little corner of the world a little happier through my being in it! And that will be ample reward for me!

JERVIS. Yes, yes! Of course! Virtue is always its own reward, but it's very satisfactory when Providence throws in some little additional bonus. And I am quite sure than Nangle will insist on——

NANGLE. You may be sure I shall.

Enter, left, MRS. BOSTOCK, MISS BOSTOCK, *and* PREBENDARY BOSTOCK.

MRS. BOS. We've just heard the welcome news!

JERVIS. Let me present Mr. Nangle—Mrs. Bostock, Miss Bostock, Mr. Bostock.

(*Hand-shakings and bows exchanged.*)

PREB. We are rejoiced to hear of such a happy issue out of a—a—very extraordinary situation.

MISS BOS. We were so much alarmed for poor Miss Nangle!

MRS. BOS. How very terrible to be placed in such circumstances—without a chaperon.

JERVIS. My dear Mrs. Bostock, it would have been equally terrible for the chaperon!

MRS. B. Jervis, we had perhaps better not discuss the matter any further.

Enter FOOTMAN, *right, announcing* SIR ROBERT *and* MISS BOWATER. *Enter, right,* MISS BOWATER, *a young lady of fifteen, and her grandfather,* SIR ROBERT BOWATER, *a hale, fruity octogenarian, a little deaf, and with a very hearty, peculiar laugh.*

SIR R. (*going round, bubbling with his peculiar laugh*). How do, Lady Bapchild? How do, Mrs. Beechinor? Mrs. Bostock, Bostock. (*Nodding.*) This is a very unfortunate affair, eh? (*Laugh.*) Ah, Punshon.

(*Goes on, stops in front of* NANGLE.)

JERVIS. Let me present, Mr. Nangle—Sir Robert Bowater.

SIR R. What, the father of the young lady? How do, sir? (*Shakes hands, and insists on keeping* NANGLE'S *hand.*) Punshon, I came over to condole with you. (*Laugh.*) But they're quite safe, eh?

JERVIS. Quite safe, Sir Robert.

SIR R. I'm glad of that. (*Laugh.*) But—(*laugh*)—poor, dear young lady! How very unfortunate. (*Laugh.*) Punshon, I want you to tell me. (*Laugh. Sees his granddaughter looking at him, pulls up short.*) Maggie, my darling,

go and talk to Lady Bapchild. (MISS BOWATER *goes and talks to the ladies.*) Now! (*Laugh. He has insisted on keeping* NANGLE'S *hand; he now links his arm in that of* JERVIS, *draws* NANGLE *and* JERVIS *aside.*) I want to know—(*laugh*)—how it all happened!

(*The three,* SIR ROBERT BOWATER, JERVIS, *and* NANGLE, *form a group, and their heads are seen to be wagging in merriment during the following scene.*)

LADY B. Has anyone heard how Miss Gage is this morning?

MRS. B. No. In the midst of my terrible anxiety about Pamela I quite forgot all about her headache.

LADY B. We must send up to her room to inquire. Would you mind ringing the bell, Agatha?

MRS. B. (*going to bell, ringing it*). I dare say Miss Gage has been quietly sleeping through all this dreadful business.

(SIR ROBERT *has a fit of uncontrollable laughter.*)

NANGLE. Excellent! Excellent!

SIR R. Punshon—(*laugh*)—I must stay and congratulate the young couple—(*laugh*)—on their moonlight trip.

JERVIS. Do, my dear Sir Robert! Do stay and congratulate them. (*Taking out watch.*)

Enter FOOTMAN, *right.*

LADY B. Will you send up to Miss Gage's room and say that we shall be glad to know how she finds herself this morning.

FOOTMAN. I beg pardon, my lady, but—(*glancing off at back*)—Miss Gage is outside on the lawn.

LADY B. On the lawn?

FOOTMAN. Yes, my lady, in company with his lordship.

LORD BAPCHILD *and* CONSTANTIA *enter, at back, into conservatory and come through into the drawing-room. He has a new straw hat in his hand; he looks quite sheepish and demoralized.* CONSTANTIA *is calmly triumphant, and perfect mistress of herself and the occasion.*

(*Exit* FOOTMAN, *right.*)

JERVIS. Bapchild! What has happened?

LORD B. Nothing! (*He beams all round with a ghastly, sheepish smile.*) It's all right, I assure you!

SIR R. (*going up to* LORD BAPCHILD, *insisting on shaking hands*). Congratulate you, my dear Bapchild! (*Laugh.*) Congratulate you, my dear young lady!

(*Wanting to shake hands with* CONSTANTIA.)

JERVIS (*getting him away*). No, Sir Robert!

That's the wrong young lady. Bapchild, what's the meaning of this?

LORD B. Well, I——

(*Beams round in a helpless, sheepish way.*)

JERVIS. Where is Miss Nangle?

LORD B. Miss Nangle?

NANGLE. Where is my daughter, Lord Bapchild?

LORD B. I don't precisely know.

JERVIS. But haven't you been out to sea with Miss Nangle?

LORD B. No. I've been out to sea with—(*glancing helplessly at* CONSTANTIA)—this young lady, and I—a——

(*Looks imploringly to* CONSTANTIA *to get him out of it.*)

CON. (*with magnificent self-possession*). Lord Bapchild has done me the honour to ask me to become his wife, and I have accepted him.

(*General consternation, and a long silence.*)

JERVIS (*very sternly*). Bapchild, this is not true!

LORD B. No! No—at least—(*turning helplessly to* CONSTANTIA)—I did not look upon the matter as finally decided, eh?

CON. Oh, quite finally decided. When you pressed me so eagerly, how could I refuse?

JERVIS. But I don't understand—you left here with Miss Nangle.

LORD B. No, no, I assure you I didn't.

JERVIS. You told me you were going to row Miss Nangle over to Canchester, and propose to her on the way!

LORD B. Did I? Did I?

JERVIS (*losing his temper*). Will you please, for heaven's sake, Bapchild, tell us exactly what did happen last night?

LORD B. I don't quite know.

Enter FOOTMAN, *right.*

FOOTMAN. (*To* MRS. BEECHINOR.) If you please, ma'am, Mrs. Jobson, from the County Hotel, at Southwich, has brought Miss Beechinor back.

PAMELA *enters, breathlessly, right. Exit* FOOTMAN.

MRS. B. Pamela, my darling!

(*Embracing her.*)

PAM. Oh, mamma, the most awful things have been going on in this house the last six months! They have been deceiving you!

MRS. B. Who?

PAM. (*Glances at* CONSTANTIA, *who looks very threateningly at her.*) Miss Nangle and Mr. Langton! Oh, they have been red-peppering you!

MRS. B. Red-peppering me?

PAM. All the messages about Red Pepper have been nothing but a blind to shut your eyes, so that they might carry on the most dreadful, wicked things that ever have been carried on anywhere!

MRS. B. (*alarmed*). Shush! Shush! Shush!

PAM. (*taking no heed*). Miss Nangle calls you Old Tabby, and I heard her say to Miss Gage, yesterday morning, "How can we red-pepper Old Tabby to-day?" (CONSTANTIA *makes a motion to stop her.*) No, you can't stop me, Miss Gage! I told you all your wickedness should come out! And now it shall!

MRS. B. (*getting more and more alarmed*). Shush! Shush! Go to your room and change your clothes at once!

PAM. (*taking no heed*). And there was something going on last evening! I know there was! And I threatened I'd tell you, and then they seized me, and dragged me to the boat, and kidnapped me away to Southwich——

MRS. B. Yes, yes, dear. Go to your room——

PAM. But it's only right you should know, mamma. Oh, if I was to tell half or a quarter of what has been going on here, I'm sure nobody would believe me——

MRS. B. I will thoroughly inquire into it by-and-by.

PAM. Ask Miss Nangle why she didn't come to church last Sunday morning! Ask her——

MRS. B. Go to your room this instant, miss!

PAM. Oh, I shall be able to open your eyes, mamma. (*Exit, left.*)

NANGLE. Mrs. Beechinor, may I ask where my daughter it?

MRS. B. (*very much embarrassed*). I'm not quite sure. I will thoroughly inquire into the whole matter.

NANGLE (*very sternly*). But, my dear lady, am I to understand that you don't know?

MRS. B. (*Going off, left, thoroughly breaks down.*) I will never again undertake the care of any girl, or pretend that a lifetime of experience gives me the right to say that I know anything about the hussies, or how bad and deceitful they can be! (*Sobbing.*) After all my care! After all my kindness! After keeping a school for six years——(*She catches sight of Sir Robert who is bubbling over with his particular laugh—stops, looks at him indignantly and exit, left, sobbing. A long, awkward silence.*)

SIR R. (*Has been carefully stifling his laughter all through the scene with great difficulty.*) Well, Punshon, I must be getting back home. I suppose we shall all meet at the sports this afternoon. (*No reply.*) Now, Maggie, my darling!

(MISS BOWATER *goes off, right.*) Good-bye, everybody. (*Nodding all round.*)

(*Exit* SIR ROBERT BOWATER, *right. The moment after he has gone off a prolonged outburst of his peculiar laughter is heard outside. Inside the same embarrassed silence.*)

PREB. (*After a pause.*) I preach at the Canchester parish church on Sunday morning. I think I will walk by the river, and throw together a few thoughts for my discourse.

(*Exit, much embarrassed, through conservatory. The silence continues.*)

MRS. BOS. (*To* MISS BOSTOCK.) Dearest, I think we ought to look out the lace for your dress this afternoon.

MISS BOS. Yes, mamma. (*Going off, left.*)

LADY B. I don't think we will go to the sports this afternoon, eh, Jervis?

JERVIS. I shan't! (*Opening door, left, for* MRS. BOSTOCK *and* MISS BOSTOCK *to go out.*) But we'll send you over all the same.

MRS. BOS. (*Going off, left.*) Thank you so much. (*Exeunt* MRS. BOSTOCK *and* MISS BOSTOCK, *left.* JERVIS *returning, comes up to* NANGLE. *The two men stand and look at each other with a savage grin.*)

Enter FOOTMAN, *right.*

FOOTMAN. (*To* NANGLE.) If you please, sir, Mr. Langton and Miss Nangle are in the library, and they would like to see you.

NANGLE. Oh, Lady Bapchild, have I your permission?

LADY B. Certainly.

NANGLE. (*To* FOOTMAN.) I will come to them.

(*Exit* FOOTMAN, *right. Exit* NANGLE *after him, with great determination.*)

LORD B. (*To* CONSTANTIA.) You know if you hadn't dropped the oar this would never have happened.

CON. Dear Lord Bapchild, I shall make it the rule of my life never to contradict you; but on this occasion you must let me say that it was you who dropped the oar.

Enter 2ND FOOTMAN, *left, with card on tray, which he brings to* LADY BAPCHILD.

LADY B. (*taking card.*) Mrs. Gage!

CON. Dear mother! I will come to her.

2ND FOOTMAN. The lady asks to see you, my lady.

LADY B. Where is she?

2ND FOOTMAN. I've shown her into the river-parlour, my lady.

LADY B. I will see her there.

(*Exit* FOOTMAN, *left.*)

CON. Dear Lady Bapchild, if you don't mind, I will come, too.

LADY B. (*embarrassed*). It's a most unfortunate piece of business. I think you must have planned it all beforehand!

CON. Planned the tide, Lady Bapchild?

LADY B. Well, it looks very suspicious, but—(*very embarrassed and inconsequent*)—I suppose you had better see your mother.

(*Exit, left.* CONSTANTIA *is following her;* JERVIS *stops her.*)

JERVIS. Miss Gage, if Lord Bapchild should have the very bad taste to wish to withdraw from this engagement——

CON. Oh, but he won't!

JERVIS. No. But if he should be so foolish, and so ungallant, you would allow us to find some way of consoling your disappointment, eh?

CON. (*shaking her head, smiling*). I have not entered into this engagement lightly, and—(*dropping her voice, and glancing at* LORD BAPCHILD, *who is sitting looking hopelessly on the carpet*)—believe me, it is the wisest thing Lord Bapchild has ever done.

JERVIS. You think so?

CON. I'm sure of it. And in six months you will be the first to acknowledge it. (*Exit, left.*)

JERVIS. You've made a pretty muddle of this business, Bapchild.

LORD B. What had I better do?

JERVIS (*contemptuously*). I don't know. Do you want to marry the girl?

LORD B. I am not wholly sure that I do.

JERVIS. Then why on earth did you propose to her?

LORD B. It was an accident.

JERVIS. Accident?

LORD B. We were in a cottage together; I expressed some admiration of her back hair; I have an indistinct recollection of what followed, but before I was aware of it, I had proposed to her. I assure you, it's quite as much of a surprise to me as it is to you.

Enter FOOTMAN, *right.*

FOOTMAN. If you please, my lord, Carter the vet says Red Pepper has taken a sudden turn for the worse, and if you want to see him alive you had better come over at once.

LORD B. (*Hopelessly demoralized and nervous, looks inquiringly at* JERVIS, *who takes no notice.*) I think I will go and see Red Pepper. (*To* FOOTMAN.) Tell Carter I'll come at once.

(*Exit* FOOTMAN, *right.* LORD BAPCHILD *is following.*)

CONSTANTIA *enters, left.*

CON. Dear Lord Bapchild, my mother is waiting to make your acquaintance.

LORD B. Oh! I was just going over to see Red Pepper——

CON. But surely you would rather see my mother?

LORD B. Well, I—I think I ought to see Red Pepper.

(*Appeals to* JERVIS, *who takes no notice.*)

CON. Of course, I shall always wish you to do as you please in everything. But on this occasion you must see that it is absolutely necessary for you to have an interview with mother.

LORD B. Oh, very well, but——

(*She takes him off left;* LORD BAPCHILD *goes most unwillingly, looking back at* JERVIS. JERVIS, *left alone, drops into armchair, sticks his hands in his pockets, stretches out his legs, and gives way to a fit of grim, ironical laughter.*)

Enter NANGLE, *right.*

NANGLE. Punshon, this is most vexatious.

JERVIS. What?

NANGLE. My daughter and this fellow Langton have been making love to each other all the six months she has been here. And now, if you please, my young lady has given me five minutes'

notice that they leave here by the eleven train for London; that they get married as soon as possible, and then go off to California. What am I to do?

JERVIS. I should stop her.

NANGLE. But she's of age. I can't stop her.

JERVIS. Then I should let her go.

NANGLE. What, and disinherit her? What shall I do with all my money if I don't leave it to her?

JERVIS. My dear Nangle, I'm very sorry it's not coming into our family as we arranged. But, frankly, my nephew would be the worst possible husband for your daughter, and this Miss Gage seems to have her head screwed on the right way. I think we shall have to let Bapchild marry her. So I don't see what you can do except make the best of a bad job and let Langton marry your daughter!

NANGLE. But I said—I said I'd be damned if she should marry him.

JERVIS. That's awkward. Let it be a lesson to you never to use bad language—except in really great emergencies.

NANGLE. But I have said it, and I don't want to—to——

JERVIS. To run any risk. No, I wouldn't.

NANGLE. Then, my dear Punshon, what am I to do?

JERVIS. My dear Nangle, I've shown you the only possible courses open to you, and I've advised you to take each of them. Now I must leave it to your wisdom to decide.

NANGLE (*very firmly*). No! No! I've said she shall never marry him with my consent, and I'm——

JERVIS. Shush!

(NANGLE *goes up, and is seen to be emphatically arguing and shaking his head.*)

LORD BAPCHILD *enters very dejectedly, left.*

JERVIS. Well?

LORD B. I've had some talk with Mrs. Gage—

JERVIS. Well?

LORD B. She seems to be a very strong-minded lady——

JERVIS. Well?

LORD B. She points out very forcibly that I have no option except to marry Miss Gage.

JERVIS. Well?

LORD B. What would you do?

JERVIS. If you have no option, I should——

LORD B. Yes?

JERVIS. Marry her.

LORD B. That does seem to be the only way out of the difficulty.

JERVIS. And honestly, I believe she'll make you a very good wife.

LORD B. (*dubiously*). Ye-es, perhaps. (*Brightening.*) And she has really remarkable back hair. Still——

JERVIS. Still what?

LORD B. Mrs. Gage dropped a hint that she proposes to spend the greater portion of the year with us at the Court.

JERVIS. (*Sympathetic shrug of the shoulders.*) Ah! Ah!

(LORD BAPCHILD *sits down in a state of sickly dejection and stares at the carpet during the following scene.* NANGLE *has been pacing backwards and forwards arguing with himself and working himself into a fury.*)

JANE *and* GEORGE *enter, right.*

JANE. We have come to say good-bye.

NANGLE. (*To George.*) I must warn you that if you take this young lady away you will entirely destroy her chance of inheriting some hundreds of thousands of pounds, and—(*bursting into fury with* JANE)—that you need never come to me for help!

JANE. We shall never come to you for help.

GEORGE. I am in a position to keep your daughter, not extravagantly——

JANE. Quite as extravagantly as I wish, Georgie.

GEORGE. Put yourself in my place, sir. What would you do if the girl you loved better than your life was ready to trust herself to you, and if you felt that you could win the whole world itself for her sake and make her the happiest woman in it—what would you do?

NANGLE. I should go and ask her father's consent.

GEORGE. That's just what I have done.

NANGLE. Then I should allow him to know what is best for her.

JANE. Ah, but that's just what he doesn't know.

NANGLE. Once for all, I will never give my consent!

JANE. Then you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself! And when I've only got five minutes to show you that I'm the most loving, dutiful, obedient daughter in the world!

NANGLE. Then why won't you show me?

JANE. Because you won't let me! You don't seem to see the situation in the least! Here are George and I—look at Georgie—you ought to be glad that I haven't chosen him for money or title or a position, but only because I loved him, and

because I felt sure that he would make a good son-in-law to you. Well, then, all you've got to do is to give your consent. It's so simple! But if you don't give your consent, what will happen? We shall still get married and go to California, and then Georgie and I will live happy ever afterwards! You can't stop us from that! And you'll be wretched and miserable over here, breaking your heart in your lonely old age, because you cast off a pair of dutiful loving children. That's what will happen, won't it, Mr. Punshon?

JERVIS. Very probable, I should say.

JANE. (*To* NANGLE.) Well then, don't be absurd! (*Stamping her foot at him and frowning.*) Don't be absurd! (*Very winningly.*) Do say "yes," and make sure of a happy old age for yourself! There! You're trying to look angry and frown, and you can't, you can't! Georgie, Mr. Punshon, look at him, he's pretending to be a stern parent, and he can't! He's smiling! He's laughing! There! . . . He can't keep it up any longer!

(*Throwing her arms around him and kissing him.*)

NANGLE. Now, understand me, miss, I do not give my consent to this marriage. (*They all look grave.*) But if you are determined to get married, I shall most likely be present at the ceremony. And I see no reason why you should go abroad,

because I shall provide for you very handsomely over here.

JANE. Dear daddy! I knew you would let us obey you!

NANGLE. But understand this, George. (*Shaking hands with* GEORGE *very heartily.*) I do not give my consent to this marriage.

GEORGE. It's not at all necessary, sir.

NANGLE. Punshon, will you kindly give the bride away?

JERVIS. Delighted to see them through!

CONSTANTIA *enters, left.*

CON. A message from the farm. Poor Red Pepper——

LORD B. Gone?

CON. (*Nods, comes to him.*) Dearest—(*he looks up*)—I have told mamma that, though we shall be pleased to see her for a day or two occasionally, I do not think it will be advisable for her to make long visits at the Court.

(LORD BAPCHILD *looks up gratefully in the midst of his dejection, squeezes her hand.*)

JANE. Connie, you traitor! You left me in the lurch!

CON. Dearest, it was the tide! Forgive me!

Enter MRS. BEECHINOR, *left, very nervously and with a frightened face.*

MRS. B. Jervis, what has happened? (*Looks round.*) I trust everything has turned out well—

JERVIS. Excellently!

JANE. Splendidly!

MRS. B. (*coming to her, embracing her*). Ah, my dear Jane, you see how necessary it is for young girls to be constantly guarded and guided—

JANE. Yes, yes, I see!

(*Looking up at* GEORGE.)

CURTAIN.

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